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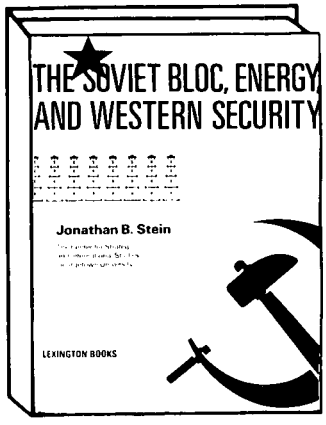

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LETTERS

Healthy Skepticism

As an attorney who has been involved in various aspects of health law since 1974, I must agree with much of what you have to say about American medicine [February]. However, there are some comments I would like to offer.

Part of the problem is the notions which Reagan and many other public leaders have fostered: that we can pursue inconsistent goals, that we don't need to recognize the choices and consequences inherent in pursuit of one goal or another and that people who demand that choices be made and consequences taken are interfering bureaucratic regulators, who by definition are bad. If Reagan can believe the country can deregulate hospitals, cut back on Medicare and continue to provide current health care services (such as they are) to senior citizens, then it is no wonder that a resident of Irvine can support Jarvis and Gann and still want a new tertiary care center in his community.

Physicians are perhaps the worst offenders of all in terms of not wanting to face choice. Physicians will look you in the eye and say we cannot ration health care, which is, of course, economic nonsense. They will also look you in the eye and tell you that there would be plenty of money for Medicare and Medi-Cal if only we didn't have all those bureaucrats in the program. This is all nonsense, too, but the doctors really believe it. And with the fervor and pocketbooks of true believers they have fought successfully to defeat or severely weaken every rational and humane effort to control the costs of health care in this state. As a result, our Medi-Cal program has sunk to its current cruel and inadequate level and threatens to sink even further.

You will undoubtedly receive many angry letters attacking the British National Health Service and insisting if we nationalized our services we would have the same parade of horribles here. What your critics have overlooked is that the U.K. nationalized its facilities immediately after two world wars and an intervening 20 years of depression. At that point, the U.K.'s health facilities were physically in very bad shape, starved for capital improvements. Since nationalization, the U.K.'s GNP has been proportionately much lower than ours. In other words, the U.K. is a poor country, among the poorest of the developed nations, and what is noteworthy about its national health service is not its problems but how well it has done, considering. We simply would not have the problems England has with our grossly overdeveloped, overcapitalized health care services.

Finally, even though I agree with your conclusions about nationalizing the hospitals (except I would rather it be done on a state by state basis than nationally) I think of the public school system and I wonder Maybe, we can't do it right no matter how we do it. Perhaps we should just turn our public institutions over to the Japanese and be done with it.

STANTON J. PRICE
Los Angeles, California

The February issue of *The Washington Monthly* featured three articles under the general title "Radical Surgery: The American Medical System's Last Hope." The radical surgery recommended "three basic steps: drafting the nation's doctors, nationalizing our hospitals, and making medical education absolutely free for anyone who qualifies."

At first I thought the articles might have been written as a parody. My next reaction was that they were deliberate attempts to smear health professionals. My third reaction was to ignore the articles as not deserving of a serious response.

I finally decided on this brief reply to make one point—these three articles are filled with examples of poor journalism. Quotes are taken out of context and deliberately misinterpreted.

One quote from a hospital company executive who happens to be our association's current president, for example, states that health costs are spiralling. The article insinuates the individual seemed "gleeful" about health-care inflation. The truth is, in that speech our president was calling for reforms in the payment system in order to control health-care costs.

I do not really quarrel with anyone's right to preach socialism, as silly as such a proposal might be; however, I do take issue with poor journalism and hope you will do something about it.

And, I do believe that the premise of your "radical surgery" was about as silly as my proposing that the government draft writers, nationalize publications, and make journalism schools free for anyone who qualifies.

On the other hand, after reading your February issue. . . .

MICHAEL D. BROMBERG
Washington, D.C.
Michael Bromberg is executive director of the Federation of American Hospitals.

Phil Keisling's diagnosis of the American medical disease ["Radical Surgery: Let's Draft the Doctors] is largely on target, but his prescription to draft the doctors and nationalize the hospitals and medical schools constitutes journalistic malpractice.

Mr. Keisling treats us to a report of how one round of government intervention after another has driven up consumers' medical costs. He shows how Medicare, Medicaid, licensing of doctors, nurses, hospitals, and medical schools, and other subsidies to the medical-industrial complex have left health professionals richer and the rest of us sicker and poorer. But instead of declaring this intervention as the cause of our medical

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ills, he pronounces a final round of intervention—nationalization—as the cure.

Reducing, not increasing, the amount of government control over medicine is the way to remedy our health-care problems. Government licensing of medical schools, which allows doctors to limit the number of new doctors into the marketplace, should be abolished. Likewise, the licensing of doctors and nurses, not just the other "health occupations" Mr. Keisling recommends, should be abolished and individuals should have freer access to prescription drugs so they can intelligently medicate themselves. Hospitals and doctors will have no incentive to reduce health costs as long as Uncle Sam foots the bill and competition is stifled.

The *Monthly* rightly denounces elitism in our culture. But what is more elitist than giving some GS-12 bureaucrat control over people's health care? Having already proposed that all of our young people be marched off to serve time in national service and now advocating the drafting of doctors, is there no social problem the *Monthly* isn't prepared to "solve" short of conscription?

JACK SHAFER
Washington, D.C.

Jack Shafer is managing editor of Inquiry.

Regarding "How to Make the Poor Die Elsewhere," and the "good advice the American Hospital Association has for you," we do have what I would consider some *good advice*. That advice, if I may make a suggestion, is to have your editors and reporters check the facts before they write.

The AHA "report" you refer to was not issued by the AHA, nor was it a report. It was, in fact, a speech given by one individual. The comments made were unauthorized (not reviewed in advance by the association and not approved) and are very much contrary to the policy and philosophy of the American Hospital Association and its member hospitals. We stated this in 1981 and have reiterated it since then.

I hope you will make an effort to correct the mistaken notion you have left with your readers.

MARY LAING BABICH
Chicago, Illinois

Mary Laing Babich is manager of media relations for the American Hospital Association.

The author replies:

I asked Linda Burns (director of the AHA's Division of Ambulatory Care) soon after receiving the paper if the paper had received any adverse reaction and whether she was at the conference representing the AHA. She replied that the paper was well received and that she was representing the association when she read the paper. There was no disclaimer in the text of the paper.

Monetary Peccadillos

John Eisendrath's article, "How the IMF Makes the World Safe for Depression" [February] is characterized by poor analysis, factual error and yet another manifestation of a dismal trend in *The Washington Monthly*'s editorial policy.

The alternative to the IMF's conditionality clauses is not, as Mr. Eisendrath apparently believes, a freer flow of international credit. The alternative is a bankruptcy-bound IMF without the credibility needed to be the catalyst to private lending it is. The IMF puts conditions on its financial assistance to assure itself of the plausibility of repayment. If there are no repayments, there is, in short order, no IMF. If there is no IMF, the collapses in credit, consumption, investment, and production would make current IMF austerity programs look like Christmastime.

Mr. Eisendrath's ignorance of the facts of the IMF's political relationship with the United States cannot be disputed. The IMF is an autonomous international organization possessing many of the legal attributes of sovereignty. Therefore, despite Mr. Eisendrath's assertion to the contrary, there is no committee of the Congress with "... direct jurisdiction over IMF activities..." and the concept of any U.S. government agency having oversight authority over the IMF is rubbish. The United States can regulate its own relationship with the IMF in any way it chooses; it cannot regulate the IMF in any manner inconsistent with the IMF's own rules.

My last point is a niggling detail in the context of the errors in this particular article, but is a symptom of a major shortcoming in *The Washington Monthly*'s editorial policy. The frequent, and often, as in this case, gratuitous references to the pay and allowances of the subjects of your reports have progressed from an amusing peccadillo to an aggravating distraction. Contrary to your heartfelt belief, good pay and a pleasant office do not imply incompetence and ill intentions.

RICHARD M. DEVENS, JR.
Boston, Massachusetts

The author replies:

I never said Congress could dictate IMF policy. But by underwriting 20 percent of its budget, Congress most definitely should have influence.

Throat Clearing

Think about this for a second: Aside from the gossip value in and around Washington, what possible good can be gained from exposing and/or speculating on the identity of "Deep Throat." ["Tilting at Windmills,"

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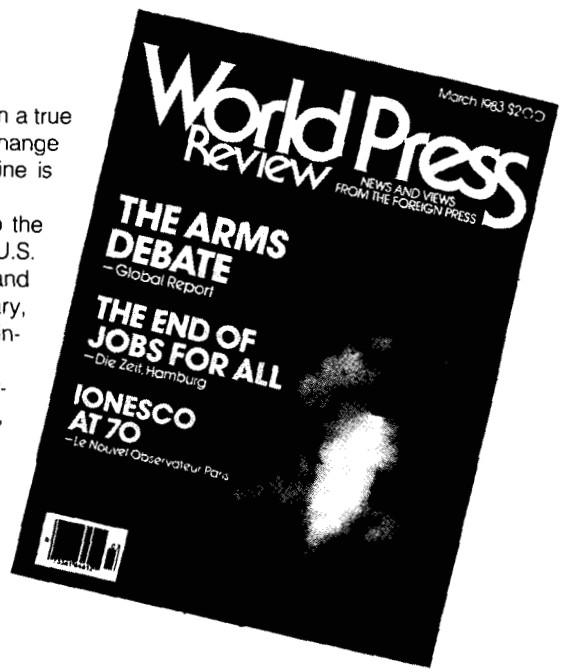

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February.] Whoever he or she is, that person performed an outstanding service to this country and probably has a reason for wishing to remain anonymous. It seems to me the least. . . the *very* least we can do is respect that.

CHRIS WALLACE
Los Angeles, California

Vietnam Revisted

Dreams of military potency die hard. Charles Peter's fantasy on "How we could have won the Vietnam war" ("Tilting at Windmills," February) saddens me. No, Mr. Peters, the Green Berets couldn't have pulled it off, and the mining of Haiphong Harbor didn't gain the U.S. anything of lasting value. We went wrong in Vietnam when we stepped into the colonial shoes of France, sponsored the Paris-bred Catholic Conservative, Diem, thwarted U.N. mandated elections and attempted to create a nation called "South Vietnam."

Those of us "bullish" enough on America to wish to impose some form of government on other nations would do well to remember that Ho Chi Minh was no Arbenz (Guatemala) to be scared off by CIA shenanigans. I'll put my dime on the boys in the black pajamas defending their homes against American Rangers and Seals and all their technology, 10,000 miles from home.

While the political situation in Vietnam is bad under the current communist regime, perhaps, the 14 million tons of explosives we used there, and the 11 million gallons of Agent Orange sprayed on once what was the "breadbasket" of Southeast Asia have made things worse for them. Within the United States, crime rates and jail populations go up during recessions. Tolerance and accommodation are easier to achieve in times of plenty. We bankrolled a giant civil war in Vietnam; blasted it, divided it, subverted it, poisoned it. How pious should we be about the winner's treatment of our cohorts?

While I'm at it, you also praised Kennedy's blockade of Cuba. I agree that it was better to blockade than to bomb the missile sites or launch an invasion. And, of course, it's fun to have overwhelming military superiority, as we did then and at Haiphong Harbor. Just like in the movies, the "bad guy" backs down because he knows he's a dead commie rat if he doesn't. However, thrill-seekers might remember that Kennedy humiliated Khrushchev unnecessarily at Cuba. Khrushchev was soon demoted, and literally all defense analyses pinpoint the big Soviet missile buildup as dating from the year of the Cuban missile crisis. As defense budgets soar to unheard of heights, in order to match "the Soviet Menace," let us make a new entry in the Guiness Book of Records. "Most expensive single show in the history of military-theatrics-for-domestic-consumption": Kennedy's handling of the Cuban missile crisis.

THOMAS M. BELL
Olympia, Washington

The editor replies:

I never said the war was winnable. I merely said and continue to believe that we were justified in sending volunteers to help those South Vietnamese who did not want to live under the heel of the North.

The Washington Monthly

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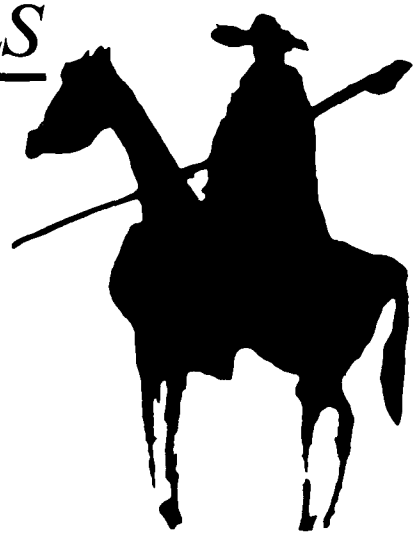
TILTING AT WINDMILLS



The announcement of the Fourteenth National Convention on Women and the Law does not contain glad tidings for those who hope for a decline in interest-group liberalism. Saturday, April 9, begins at 7:30 a.m. with a Poor Women's Breakfast/Caucus. At 1 p.m. there is a Lesbian Luncheon/Caucus, followed during the remainder of the day by the Asian-American Women's Caucus, the Native American Women's Caucus, the Latina Women's Caucus, and the Black Women's Caucus. The trumpet summons the conferees to another day of dedication to their common humanity the next morning with the Jewish Women's Breakfast/Caucus and the Disabled Women's Caucus. If you were hoping for an American Caucus, you will have to go on hoping. But I almost forgot one other. On Friday there will be a Women of Color Caucus. . . .

You may recall that summer day in 1980 when the Army rolled out its new Bradley Fighting Vehicle for inspection by the top brass, assorted other dignitaries, and the television cameras. As the spectators were told how the tank could fire its 25mm cannon while moving at highway speeds, hit targets even in darkness, and swim across rivers, the tank drove straight into the Ohio River and sank. Since then we have watched the Pershing II blow up twice on test launchings. And now comes the great F-18 test.

Paul Thayer, the new deputy secretary of defense, was once a Navy pilot. So a few weeks ago, in response to criticism the F-18 has received from many sources, including this magazine, he decided he would take it out for a trial spin himself. As he prepared to land, the nose wheel wouldn't go down. When this problem was solved and he finally put the plane down, the brakes didn't work. Mr. Thayer is still with us only because there was a very long runway. . . . These stories are amusing, but I wonder why they don't produce shame and anger at the Pentagon, and among the contractors who take its money—shame, anger, and a determination to do things right. . . .

Hundreds of novels have been written about the dark side of small-town life. The other side has been in my mind lately. In the last few months in my hometown, Charleston, West Virginia, there have been two deaths and two retirements among the people I knew there. Together they help explain what's good about life in a small town.

One of those who died, Daniel Barber, was my family doctor for many years. You

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will understand why I admired him from these words of his son:

"One of the things he was proud of at Kanawha Valley Hospital was the emphasis on patient care and never letting it become a super-bureaucracy and impersonal. He was very much concerned with ethics in the practice of medicine and I think it would be fair to say he was known as a great explainer. He had a talent for explaining to people what was wrong with them. He didn't play 'I've Got a Secret.' "

Benwood Stout, who is retiring, was the county's best probation officer for over 30 years. In the late fifties, when I was practicing law, I was often in Ben's office pleading for probation for one or another of my clients. Ben had an unerring sense of which of my clients were going to be repeaters and which were likely to go straight. He did his homework on each case and did it well. But the homework was not done by a cold or indifferent bureaucrat. It was done, as a local judge recently said, by "a man who cares very deeply about human beings." He cared both about the criminal and the victim, so he was not going to give probation to the dangerously violent. Another local judge describes a more typical case:

"Just last week, I was prepared to commit a defendant to Huttonsville for a nonviolent crime and Stout convinced me he was basically a decent kid who wouldn't get in trouble again if I gave him a good tongue-lashing."

The other man who died was Dudley Simms, the owner of a local dry goods store. He was the kind of man who is fondly remembered by anyone who ever had to do fund-raising for worthy causes. A lot of people would waste your time and theirs by letting you talk and talk, by asking a lot of dumb questions as they tried to appear hard-nosed and judicious. Simms would usually take from three to five minutes to decide whether to write the check or not. Usually he wrote it, and the world seemed benign indeed as you left his office.

The other person who retired was L.T. Anderson, a columnist for the *Charleston Gazette*. Andy could write. On his best days he belonged in the same league with Russell Baker. In fact, he could write so well that people were always asking why he stayed in a small place like Charleston. To the best of my knowledge, he never answered the question directly, but my guess is that it had a lot to do with people like Ben Stout, Dudley Simms, and Dan Barber. . . .

If you've ever had a chance to observe life at your neighborhood fire station, you know that most of the average day is devoted to sitting around. The city of Kalamazoo has come up with an inspired answer to this waste of talent. It has combined its police and fire forces, cross-training each group in the skills of the other. The result is more service for less money. The major improvement is that the fireman can spend his non-firefighting time on police patrol, but the police can also help out at those maddening moments, when after days with no fires at all, two or three break out practically at the same time. . . .

Speaking of city government, be sure to keep an eye on what yours does with its gas and oil savings. Because of OPEC's declining power, all fiscal year 1983 and many 1984 budgets contain excessive allowances for these items. And unless you let the mayor know that you're aware of this fact, the money saved is likely to go to finance trips to conferences on municipal affairs that are sure to be held in places like Honolulu, San Francisco, and Disney World. . . .

A Russian city has been renamed Brezhnev. Did the inhabitants get together out of affection and respect for their late leader and petition the authorities in Moscow? Nyet, comrade. The decision was made in Moscow and the first the locals heard of it was on the evening news. . . .

Warren Burger wants a new national appeals court to help with the work of the "overburdened Supreme Court." His picture of the nine justices staggering under a crushing load of cases has been widely accepted by the press. One exception is Jim Mann of *The Los Angeles Times*, who has looked at the justices' schedule and found that they are not in session for three months from early July to early October, during which time, he reports, most of them "end up spending a couple of months at summer retreats or in their hometowns." The court also takes a four-week break around Christmas and another in late January and early February. In between, the justices alternate between two weeks on the bench and two weeks off. "On" means they hear arguments three days a week from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. At $96,700 a year, this is the kind of crushing burden most of us could endure. . . .

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In case you missed Mary McGrory's marvelous column on Charles Z. Wick's attempt to explain Project Democracy:

"It is possible, although not likely, that someone who speaks English could explain 'Project Democracy,' President Reagan's murky and expensive scheme for promoting the 'infrastructure of democracy' around the world. But the first-draft language of Charles Z. Wick, director of the U.S. Information Agency, who would run it, is gobbledygook. The foggy, foggy dew of his prose about what 'PD' is and isn't left the Senate Foreign Relations Committee as confused—and suspicious—as when he began. 'I should like to apologize for any ambiguities that have been introduced here,' he said after several particularly befuddling passages about 'coordinating the information and sensitivities. . . to implement various communications and approaches to assist the infrastructure of the legal, business and religious communities.'

"The members were friendly to Wick, who is a person of obvious good will and good nature, but school was out when he wheeled out some huge organization charts, which Senator Christopher J. Dodd said 'made Rube Goldberg look like a computer chip.' They were supposed to lay to rest widespread fears that the $85 million will be used for the promotion of what Senator Paul E. Tsongas labeled 'Project Right-Wing Democracy.'

"One, headed 'National Security Decision Directive on Public Diplomacy,' seemed particularly ominous. It showed an International Political Committee, which sounded as if its chairman would be Yuri V. Andropov—against whom the whole effort is directed.

" 'In God's name,' said the usually long-suffering chairman, Charles H. Percy, 'who is really in charge?' 'Frankly,' said Wick with becoming humility, 'there is a lot of confusion in the government. . . . Perhaps I should not have brought those charts with me.'

"But, he insisted, the table of organization had nothing to do with 'Project Democracy.' Dodd pointed out that right under 'The International Political Committee,' in the lower left-hand corner, the words 'Project Democracy' appeared. Wick said, 'You will have to forgive me, I didn't know you were listening so carefully.' ". . .

I have long looked with sympathy on the movement toward liberalization in the Roman Catholic Church, but even I was a bit taken aback by this headline over a UPI dispatch from St. Paul, Minnesota: "Nun to re-open massage parlor." The real scandal, it turns out, was different from the apparent one. The nun was in fact giving perfectly proper massages. The city had shut her down, not because impropriety was even suspected, but because she didn't have a license. "I don't know why we have to go through all this rigamarole," she said. The reason, of course, for this and most other licensing requirements is to hold down competition.

That is why my new hero is Bernard L. Henderson, the director of Virginia's Board of Commerce, who is trying to eliminate some of that state's more ridiculous licensing requirements. Among his targets is a requirement that beauticians spend 2,000 hours in beauty school in order to even be eligible for the examination that leads to a license. These beauty schools are of course run by licensed beauticians, who profit two ways from the long training: first from tuition fees and second by delaying and discouraging potential competitors. . . .

Buried in a recent story in *The New York Times* about emergency funds to deal with high unemployment and hard times in Buffalo was this additional proof, if you needed any, of how the bureaucrats and consultants will always manage to take care of themselves: "The money—$1.2 million to retrain unemployed workers and the remaining $700,000 for studies to determine where further aid should be spent." . . .

The guilty continue to escape on technicalities. Former Governor Ray Blanton of Tennessee, who in a forthcoming book by Peter Maas appears to be the crookedest governor of the seventies, had been convicted of selling liquor licenses. His conviction was overturned, not because there was evidence of his innocence, but because "the trial judge had not questioned potential jurors thoroughly enough to find out if they had opinions about the case and the defendants."

In another case in New York, a man had been convicted on assault and weapons charges arising from his involvement in two gangland-style killings and a subsequent shoot-out with a policeman. His conviction was

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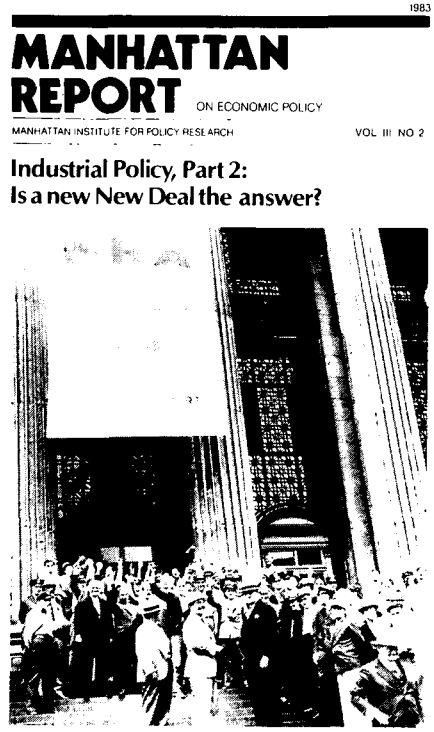
reversed—again, not because he was innocent but because the jurors had been told by court attendants that they were being sequestered during the trial "because of 'bribery' attempts and because the case involved the 'Mafia.'" A retrial was scheduled, but another judge threw the case out, again, not because the defendant was innocent, but because the prosecution hadn't brought him to trial within six months. It seems to me that the people who should be punished in these cases are the judges, the court attendants, and the prosecutors who err. Instead, the clearly guilty criminal is rewarded with freedom, and the public is punished by having a clearly guilty criminal turned loose in its midst. . . .

But if these judges were wrong, Judge Joseph L. McGlynn of the United States District Court in New York was sublimely right in a recent decision involving one of the most scandalous examples of legal greed to come to light in recent years. An antitrust suit had been settled by a $50 million payment from the defendant. The plaintiff's attorneys tried to get $20.2 million of this sum in fees—more than 40 percent of the total. For those of you who aren't lawyers, the customary fee if a case goes to trial is one third of the amount awarded the plaintiff. If it's settled before trial as this one was, the fee is usually somewhere between ten and 20 percent. Judge McGlynn gave these lawyers eight percent, which is just about what a fair fee minus a penalty for excessive greed would come to. Indeed it might have been a little high since there was evidence that the lawyers had billed for 97,000 hours of work when 15,000 is all that was needed. . . .

Another example of how the bureaucrats take care of themselves is provided by the staff of the United Steelworkers. While nearly 60 percent of the steelworkers currently are laid off and union membership has dropped from 1.4 million in 1979 to 740,000 today, no one on the staff was laid off until last month. How many were cut? Sixty percent? Fifty percent? The answer is 14 percent. . . .

And again, class, what do bureaucrats do all day? They hire consultants. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has hired the American Institute for Research to write a letter. Yes, that's right, to write a letter. It seems that the commission became convinced that car owners didn't understand the letters they were getting asking them to return defective cars for repairs. "Why can't you write it yourself?" Representative John Bryant asked Raymond Peck, the head of the NHTSA. "I am not skilled in linguistics," was the answer. . . .

My theory that all the great con men have forsaken the Brooklyn Bridge for careers in academic administration was recently fortified by a letter from Dr. Robert L. Weinmann, the editor of "Nightletter for American Medicine." He tells me that the doctors at Stanford Medical Center were not responsible for the Medicare double-billing there, as I had suggested here a few months ago. The double-billing was, says Weinmann, "strictly the brainchild of the Stanford administration." Weinmann notes that such distinguished citizens as Sandra O'Connor and John Gardner were on the board at the time the billing occurred. . . .



INDUSTRIAL POLICY—NEW WAVE OR OLD HAT?

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When the civilians who run the Defense Department ask the military to evaluate the cost-effectiveness of bases in various regions of the country, bases in the Sunbelt almost always come out ahead. One reason is obvious—better weather makes year-round operations easier. Less obvious but even more compelling factors are explained by Harold Brown, the former secretary of defense, in his new book, *Managing the Department of Defense*:

"A major reason the Sunbelt bases look more cost effective by the time the choice is presented to the Secretary of Defense is the way in which many smaller decisions, sometimes biased in nature and always biasing in effect, were made well down in the organization for decades beforehand. Generally these decisions were made by senior military officers, who were thinking not only of the most cost-effective way to manage the base structure and operate the forces. They were also weighing which organization of facilities would provide a larger number of senior managerial spots. They were thinking as well about where they and their friends would prefer to serve—in the snow or in the sun. When it came time to retire, they wanted to retire near a military hospital and a commissary—and those will be where the bases are. Under such circumstances, there is little inclination to improve or expand a base in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan when you can expand one in Florida or Texas or California instead." . . .

Ronald Reagan's concern about the deficit stops at the door of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. The White House office budget for fiscal year 1984 is 6.7 percent over 1983, and the executive residence budget is 14.7 percent higher. Not included are the many White House expenses hidden in the defense budget, such as the cost of Camp David and the presidential aircraft, and you can be sure that the increased defense budget contributes a fair share of its additional funds to those worthy causes. . . .

One of the really good things Bill Broyles has done at *Newsweek* is recruit Gene Lyons from *The Texas Monthly*. Lyons is brilliant, original, and courageous. And if you don't believe me, read his *Newsweek* pieces on Norman Mailer (January 24) and William Buckley (February 21). Even with fresh talent like Lyons and *Washington Monthly* alumni like Jonathan Alter and Walter Shapiro, Broyles is going to have a tough time overtaking his competition. *Time*'s cover on Chuck Spinney last month was one of the finest pieces of defense reporting ever done by a major magazine. . . .

If we didn't have an air force, there would be no support for the MX or the B1. Of course, you say, and if we didn't have an army there would be no support for rifles. I understand that. What I am trying to say is something else. It is that the support for the MX and B1 is based not on the need for them in our defense—there are other ways of meeting the needs they are designed to fill—but on the Air Force's need to have something to do during the next decade or so. Without those two weapons, the institutional prospects are not very bright.

These institutional imperatives of the Air Force demand that its personnel and their friends lobby for the MX and B1, without regard to the reasonableness of the arguments that can be made against them. This means that because the Air Force lobby is so strong, reasonable arguments are far from certain to carry the day against these weapons. If we want to be certain of carrying the day, we had better place ourselves in the shoes of the airmen and understand the complex of institutional and individual career needs that motivate their passionate advocacy of the MX and B1. Until we figure out some other way to deal with these needs, our reasonable arguments may avail us nothing.

I dwell at some length on this matter because I think these institutional and career needs are not well understood by the press. Like other similar facts of life in the culture of government, they are not understood by the press because the press has so little experience with government.

A couple of years ago I wrote a book about the various cultures of this town called *How Washington* Really *Works*. A journalist who reviewed the book praised the section about the press and denounced everything else. I was always curious about this, because he had first-hand knowledge of the culture of the press but of none of the others I was discussing. He decided I

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was wrong about the others, not because of what he knew firsthand about those worlds but because of what he had read other journalists write about those worlds. Since they, too, lacked first-hand experience, I had a problem.

It is in fact a problem I've had since the first days of *The Washington Monthly*. We're trying to explain what goes wrong in government from the perspective of the insider who manages to step back and take a critical look at what's going on. Reporters who haven't been inside are uncertain of what to make of such an approach or what it asserts as true.

A recent example of this uncertainty was provided by this UPI story:

"Navy Secretary John F. Lehman Jr., in a scathing attack on bureaucrats, says the Pentagon could reduce its operational costs 20 percent by firing the 6,000 people in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.

"In an interview with Copley News Service, Lehman complained of 'relentless pressure' from Pentagon bureaucrats accountable to nobody who want to 'centralize everything'—at enormous cost.

" 'Without question, Ed, this building, I believe, could be run at a 20 percent savings if we could get rid of those 6,000 bureaucrats in OSD who are accountable, essentially, to nobody,' Lehman told Copley correspondent L. Edgar Prina. 'They masquerade as [agents] to pull power to the secretary of defense, but it's exactly the opposite,' Lehman said during the recent interview in his office. 'They take power away from the secretary and the appointed officials,' he complained.

"Lehman also had sharp criticism for the Defense Logistics Agency, an organization of 38,000 people that buys common items for the armed services and seeks to assure that defense contractors comply with their contracts.

" 'If you look at the DLA and the consolidated defense agencies, they've swallowed up about 25 to 30 percent of the defense budget and they are, without question, the worst managed of any enterprises in the Pentagon,' he said. Lehman said elected officials 'can't see inside DLA—you can't hire, you can't fire and you can't make any budget decisions.'

"He also said the permanent bureaucrats do not care who is defense secretary, 'they just don't want him telling them what to do.' Lehman said he has had to struggle against the bureaucrats to get second-source producers for Navy weapons and materials to ensure the economies of competition. 'The bureaucrat is most comfortable with sole-source and cost-plus contracts because nobody gets in trouble, nobody ever fails' with them, he said."

Notice that nowhere in the story does the reporter evaluate Lehman's charges. The reader is given no hint as to whether Lehman is profoundly right or profoundly wrong. (He was in fact a good deal closer to the former than to the latter.) If the reporter had worked inside the government, he would not only have had a nose for whether Lehman was right or wrong, he would also have had some sense of where to find the facts that would confirm or deny his instincts.

The New York Times recently ran an article about how Yale is now teaching practical politics. But, as one read the story, one realized that only the politics of getting elected are involved. What we need are more courses in the politics of making the government work. The Yale course has students working in the precincts. That's good, but I would also have them working in government agencies. . . .

One reason lawyers are seeking those outrageous fees is that they need them to pay the salaries to which they feel entitled. At Cravath, Swaine & Moore in New York, first-year partners now get $165,000, according to Steven Brill of *The American Lawyer*. One year later, their take will be about $325,000. . . .

Terry Dolan, the head of the National Conservative Political Action Committee, tugs at the heartstrings of the faithful on the Right with his latest direct-mail appeal. "I have some bad news," he begins, and goes on to say that his "good friend," congressman-elect Jack Swigert, had died of bone cancer. "Because of your support for NCPAC, we were privileged to help get Jack elected. That's why I've assumed the responsibility of letting you know personally about Jack. It's also why I feel compelled to appeal to you once again in our efforts to find someone to take Jack's place."

The Wall Street Journal's Al Hunt looked into the facts behind this moving plea and reports: "The reality is that Mr. Dolan never even met Mr. Swigert and NCPAC gave only $500 to the GOP candidate's campaign last fall."

—*Charles Peters*

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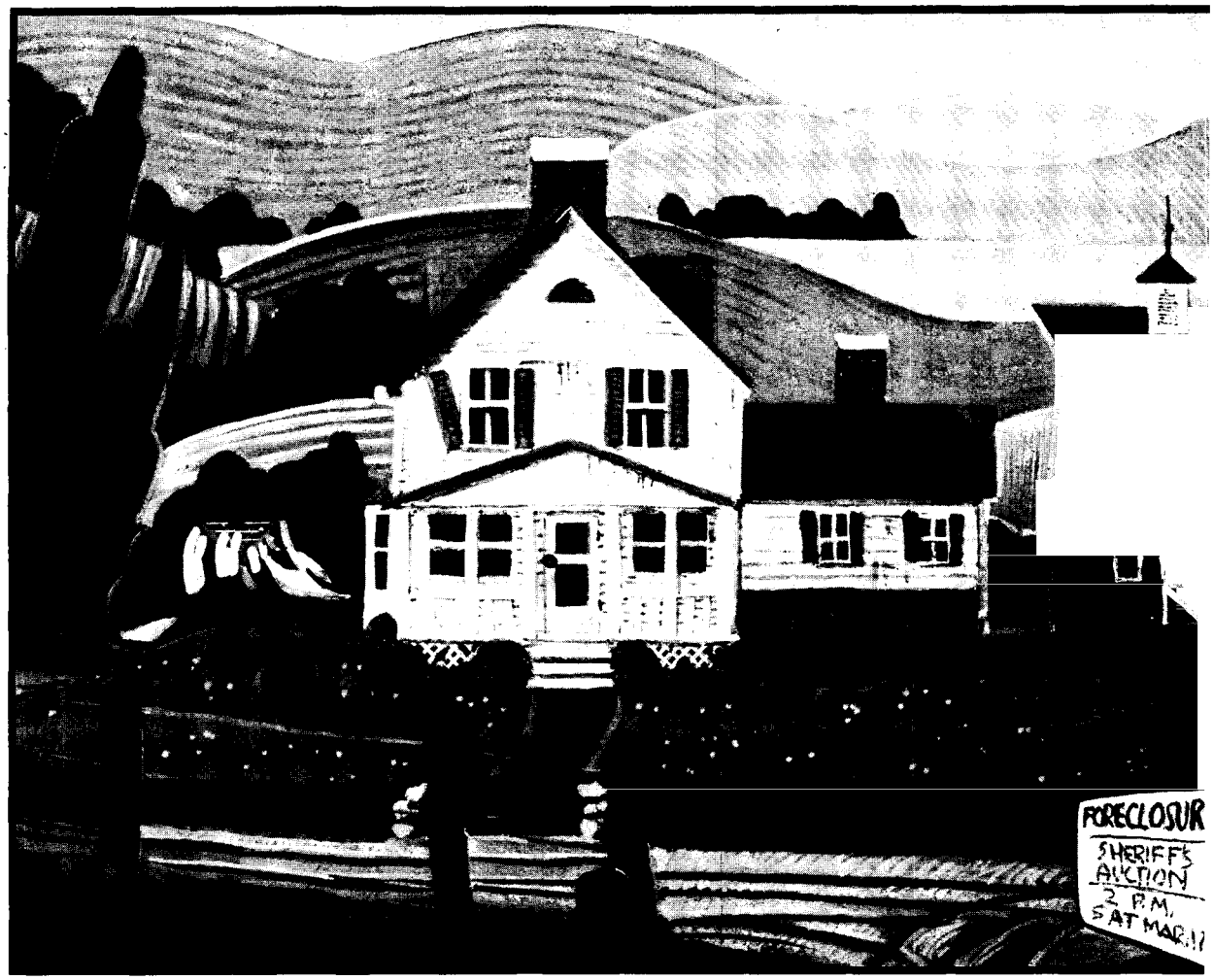

America's Real Farm Problem:

by Rep. Bryan Dorgan

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Illustration by Tom O. Miller

It can be solved

Recent scenes from America's farm belt seem like a grainy film clip from the thirties. Young families putting their home and farm machinery on the auction block. Men, choked with emotion, breaking down in tears as they describe their plight. Angry farmers organizing, getting madder and madder.

It's not as bad as the thirties yet; no governor has called out the National Guard to stop the foreclosures, the way North Dakota's William "Wild Bill" Langer did in 1933. But the pain is running deep. Losing a farm is not like having a new Chevrolet or a color TV repossessed. In many cases, what's lost is land that's been in the family for generations—and a way of life that for many is the only one they've ever known or wanted.

Representative Byron Dorgan is a congressman from North Dakota.

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It's not that other victims of the recession deserve less sympathy. But there's an important difference between the plight of the farmer and that of other producers. What's happening in the farm belt is a far cry from what's happening in Pittsburgh and Detroit. Nobody is berating our farmers for falling behind the foreign competition and losing their edge, like the auto and steel industries. Nobody is shoving books on Japanese management into their faces. To the contrary, American farmers are our all-star economic performers. When other countries want to find out how to improve agriculture, they don't send their delegations to Tokyo. They send them to Iowa and Kansas and the Dakotas.

And the farmers' reward? Most North Dakota wheat farmers are getting $4 for a bushel of wheat that costs them $5.50 to grow. Farmers are making less in real income today than they did in 1934. Creditors are foreclosing in record numbers; the Farmers Home Administration alone reports that at least 4,000 of its borrowers were forced out of business in 1982.

Rural Myths

Agriculture is a $140 billion-a-year industry, our nation's largest, far bigger than steel, automobiles, or any other manufacturing enterprise. Farming and food-related businesses generate one out of five jobs in private industry and account for 20 percent of our GNP. Sooner or later the problems on the farm catch up with the rest of us, as the laid-off employees of International Harvester already know too well. Students of the Depression will also recall that it was long *before* the 1929 crash—while the market was still revving up—that farm income began falling. The troubles on the farm were a large part of the weight that ultimately dragged the entire economy down into the Depression.

If you read the editorial columns of *The Wall Street Journal*, you know that some people have a simple explanation for the farmers' plight. Too much production is the problem, they say, and if government would only stop subsidizing overproduction by keeping prices artificially high, the free market would work its will and weed out the inefficient producers. What's more, many conservatives and liberals alike believe farmers are only getting their just deserts, having grown fat and happy on government price supports and double-digit inflation. You've seen the caricatures on "60 Minutes"—farmers driving big Cadillacs, spending their winters in Boca Raton—and still complaining that the government doesn't pay them enough *not* to grow certain crops.

Those aren't the farmers I know. But with less than four percent of all Americans now living on farms, it's little surprise people have so many misconceptions about our farm program. Start with the "overproduction" argument. There are children and older people in this country who still don't have enough to eat, and roughly 450 million people in the world who go hungry most of the time. That people talk about "overproduction" rather than "underdistribution" is rather telling in itself. But more to the present point: almost from the time the early settlers planted their first row, American farmers have been growing more food than the nation could consume. The tendency toward producing surpluses is a perennial problem. It hardly explains the extraordinary difficulties our farmers now face.

As for the "60 Minutes" caricatures, they are just that—caricatures. Last year the federal government paid farmers $1.5 billion in direct subsidies (it loaned another $11.4 billion that farmers must repay). Money from these federal programs came to about two percent of total receipts in 1982 for the average farmer, whose farm netted just $8,000. Add in what he and his family earned away from the farm, and his household still made less than a GS-11 civil servant and about half as much as a young lawyer on Wall Street. That's for working from morning to night and doing what many Americans no longer do—produce something the rest of us need.

But this is no blanket apology for the nation's farm policies—far from it. There *are* some farmers who get more than they deserve from the government, and nobody gets madder about that than the vast majority of farmers who bear no resemblance to them. Egregious abuses do exist, and it's time that representatives from the farm states (of which I'm one) begin to eliminate them. If we ignore such problems or dismiss them as inevitable, they will continue to act as lightning rods for attacks on all farm programs. Representatives of farm states must clean their own house for if they don't, I'm afraid, someone else will do it—hurting farmer and non-farmer alike.

The nation needs a federal farm program; to think otherwise in today's highly competitive international economy is self-defeating and naive. But we need the *right* kind of farm program, one that not only meets the test of fairness, but that promises to keep American agriculture second to none.

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What Reagan Should Know . . . But Doesn't

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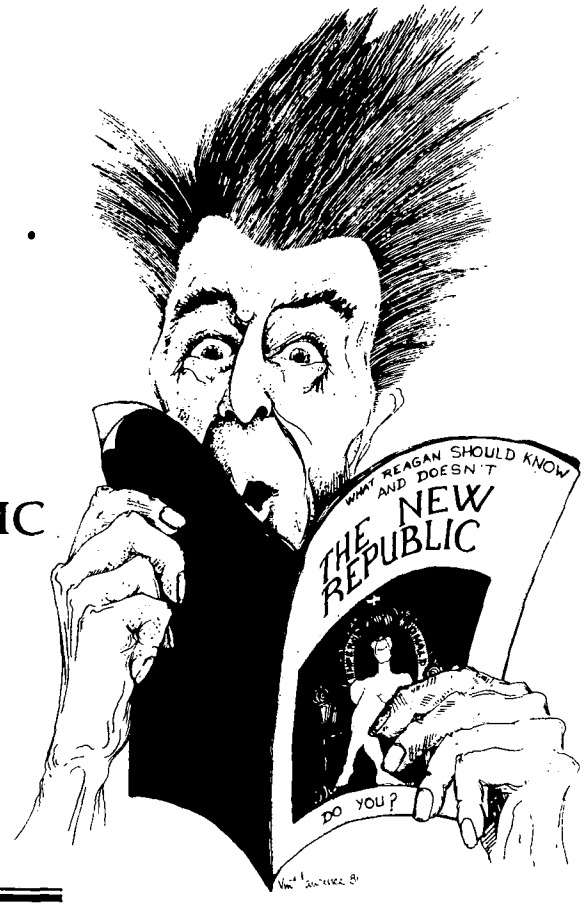

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Unfortunately, that's not the kind of farm program we now have. Approaches that were fine in the thirties are no longer doing the job. In fact, what began as survival programs for family farmers are becoming the domain of extra-large producers who often elbow aside the very family farmers for whom these programs were originally intended. Congress must bear much of the blame for this. We continue to target most farm assistance not according to the circumstances of the individual farmer but largely according to the volume of the commodity he grows. While these federal programs have all been done in the name of the family farmer, the interests of the various commodity groups have not always been identical to those of the nation's family farmers.

This is not to criticize these groups, for everyone is entitled to his say. But it is to suggest that we in Congress have talked too much about programs for feed grains and wheat and corn and assorted "market prices" and "loan rates"—and not enough about the kind of agriculture that's best for the country. And we've done more than waste money in the process. For if our agricultural policy continues largely unchanged, I'm concerned the criticisms that now so tragically apply to the nation's automakers—that they became too big, too inflexible, and too inefficient to compete—may one day be appropriate for America's agriculture.

Farm Economics

To understand the failings of existing farm programs, it's important to understand the roots of the current farm crisis. At the heart of the problem is money—how much there is and how much it costs to borrow.

A farmer is a debtor almost by definition. In my own state, it's not unusual for a wheat farmer with 1,000 acres to owe several hundred thousand dollars for land and machinery. In addition to making payments on these loans, it's common for such a farmer to borrow about $40,000 each spring to cover fertilizer, diesel fuel, seed, and other operating expenses. The months before the harvest will be anxious ones as the farmer contemplates all the things that could bring financial hardship: bad weather, crop disease, insects, falling commodity prices. If he has a good year, the farmer can repay his loans and retain some profit; in a bad one, he can lose his whole farm.

Money thus becomes one of the farmer's biggest expenses. Most consumers can find some refuge from high interest rates by postponing large purchases like houses or cars. Farmers have no choice. In 1979, for example, farmers paid $12 billion in interest costs while earning $32 billion; last year they paid $22 billion in interest costs, while earning only $20 billion. In a business in which profit margins are small, $4,000 more in interest can mean the difference between profit and loss. Since 1975, 100,000 family farms have disappeared, and while interest rates have fallen recently, they still imperil the nation's farmers.

This is why the most basic part of our nation's farm policy is its money and credit policy—which is set by Paul Volcker and the Federal Reserve Board. The Federal Reserve Board's responsibility for nearly ruining our economy is well-known. What's often overlooked is how the board's policies have taken an especially devastating toll on farmers. While high interest rates have increased farm expenses, they've also undermined the export market farmers have traditionally relied on.

Illustration by Tom O. Miller

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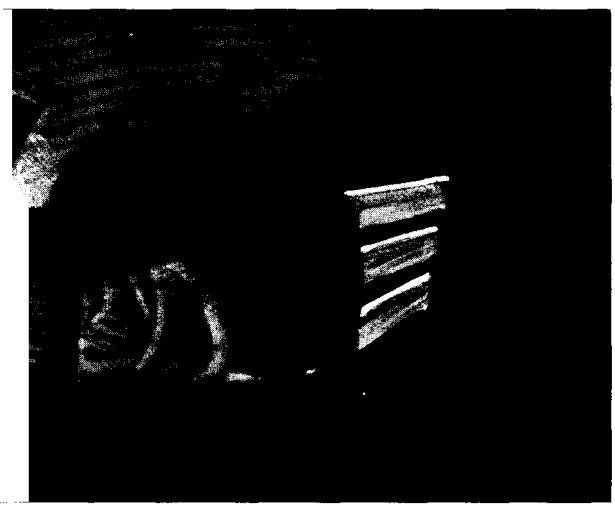
The federal government still dispenses aid to farmers with a blindfold on, treating a multi-thousand acre agrifactory as if it were a bedraggled Okie with a hand-crank tractor and a cow. As a result, 29 percent of all benefits go to the largest 1 percent of the nation's farmers.

High interest rates, by stalling our economic engines, have been a drag on the entire world's economy. Developing and third-world nations have been particularly hard hit; struggling just to meet interest payments on their loans from multinational banks, they have had little cash left over to buy our farm products.

Even those countries that could still afford our farm products abandoned us for other producers. Our interest rates were so high they attracted multinational bankers, corporations, and other who speculate on currencies of different countries. These speculators were willing to pay more for dollars in terms of pesos, yen, or marks because those rates guaranteed them such a substantial return.

The news commentators called the result a "strong dollar," which gave us a rush of pride. But what did this strong dollar really mean to the farmer? It meant people in other countries found themselves suddenly poorer when they went to buy something made or grown in America. In 1981, for example, West Germans paid 21 percent more for American soybeans, even though our farmers were getting 11 percent *less* for those very same soybeans than they had the previous year. Overall, our "strong dollar" has been jacking up the price of American farm exports by a full 25 percent, biting our potential foreign customers with a 25 percent surcharge the moment they start thinking of buying American. No wonder these exports have dropped for the first time in 12 years. This isn't a strong dollar, it's a big banker's dollar—and with a central bank like the Federal Reserve Board, who needs soil erosion, grasshoppers, or drought?



To be fair, interest rates aren't solely responsible for undercutting our farmers' export markets. President Carter's grain embargo did more than close the Russian market; it also drove away other foreign customers who wondered how dependable we were. Reagan has lifted the embargo, but to little avail, since he still refuses to sign a long-term grain contract with the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, our foreign competitors have quickly stepped into the breach, supporting their farmers with generous subsidies that make ours look miserly by comparison. Last September, for example, wheat from the U.S. and the Common Market countries was selling for almost the same price on the international market. But while the U.S. farmer was getting about $3.40 a bushel, his Common Market counterpart received $5.37.

Both the Federal Reserve Board's market-skewing policies and the hefty subsidies that foreign agriculture receives illustrate an important point. Those who say America should go back to a "free market" in agriculture are asking our

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farmers to go back to something that no longer exists. In today's world there's no free market in agriculture, just as there is none in steel, automobiles, or other major industries.

We learned during the Depression that agriculture, by its very nature, requires a moderating hand to smooth out the violent cycles that otherwise could destroy even the best farmers. No other producers have to confront the sudden price shifts with which farmers regularly contend. Automakers, for example, don't have to worry that prices for their product may drop 50 percent, as wheat prices did from 1974 to 1977. This is why even that bastion of free-market orthodoxy, the Heritage Foundation, concedes the need for a government role in agriculture.

Agriculture is one of the few remaining industries where American skill is still the envy of the rest of the world. It's also the one that's been most devastated by the Federal Reserve Board's tight-money policies.

Home-Grown Depression

For the nation's first 150 years, there was no farm program as such. The Department of Agriculture wasn't created until 1862, and when President Lincoln proposed it to Congress he could applaud the nation's farmers as a "great interest so independent in its nature as to not have demanded and extorted more from government." For the next 70 years the department limited itself largely to statistics and research. Farmers received little in the way of subsidies; like all other consumers, they helped subsidize manufacturers through the tariffs they paid on imported goods.

Contrary to popular belief, the Depression hit our farms long before the Okies started their desperate treks across the dust bowl in their sputtering Model T's. During World War I Europe bought our food like it was going out of style. Prices rose to record heights; farmers expanded their operations and borrowed heavily to do so.

Then the war ended. Export markets quickly dried up as European countries started to rebuild their own agriculture. American farmers watched helplessly as prices plummeted, leaving many with huge debts to repay and no income with which to pay them. A rash of foreclosures followed, rehearsing a cycle that bears an eerie similarity to the current one. By 1932 farm income was less than one-third of what it had been in 1919. During this period, more than 1.5 million Americans left the farm. (The exodus was reversed during the Depression, when many returned to the farm in order to survive.)

Then, as now, the conventional economists and their camp followers in Congress and the press found little alarming in this hardship. The "invisible hand," they said, would force farmers to produce less until prices returned to normal levels. The "weak" and the "inefficient" might be cut down in the process, but that was the way the free market was supposed to work. It didn't.

Unfortunately, someone forgot to tell the nation's farmers about the economic etiquette that professors and journalists expected of them. As prices continued to fall, the farmers didn't produce less—they produced more. It's not hard to understand why. Farmers have certain set costs—such as debt—whether or not they plant a single seed. When prices dropped, many tried to produce more to make up the difference. Besides, to farm is to hope. The market may be terrible one year, but who knows what will happen next? Will there be drought in Europe? Blight in Russia? When you have to decide how much to plant in the spring, you have little idea what the market will really be in the fall. The worse things look, the more you pin your hopes on a sudden surge in prices. So you plant.

Those who put all the blame on government for today's excess production and low prices are long on theory and short on history. We produced "too much" throughout the twenties, when there was no farm program to speak of. And it wasn't the weak and the inefficient who tumbled then. It was just about everybody.

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Blind Generosity

The New Dealers recognized that when it comes to agriculture, the invisible hand can end up shooting farmers in the foot. Their solution was straightforward—and effective. Remedies like the Agricultural Adjustment Act were begun to prop up the prices of certain commodities so that the farmers who grew them could count on at least a minimal return. The main approach was to link government assistance to the farmers' agreement to cut production, thus forcing prices to rise according to the laws of supply and demand.

These relief programs were not geared to the circumstances of individual farmers. They were aimed at regulating the supply and price of certain commodities. Still, the commodity approach amounted to a relief program for the family farm because there just weren't many other kinds of farms around. In 1932 one of four Americans lived on a farm, and for that reason the commodity programs were a major part of the whole New Deal relief effort.

Over the last half century, this commodity approach has remained relatively unchanged, while American agriculture has changed radically. The number of farms today is one-third what it was during the Depression, and just seven percent of these control over half the farmland and account for over half the sales. Yet while farming has become more concentrated, the government still dispenses federal aid with a blindfold on, treating a multi-thousand-acre agrifactory giant as if it were a bedraggled Okie with a hand-crank tractor and a cow. As a result, 29 percent of all federal farm benefits go to the top one percent of our farmers.

The government distributes this largess in a variety of ways. Some programs amount to government-guaranteed prices. For a few crops—tobacco and peanuts, for example—the government sanctions an allotment system by which the marketing of these is strictly controlled. The government also provides crop insurance, disaster relief, and subsidized loans for such things as purchasing more farmland and meeting operating expenses.

The traditional mainstay of the farm program is the "commodity loan." Each year the government establishes a loan rate for major crops, including wheat, corn, barley, sorghum, and soybeans. The rate for wheat, for example, was $3.55 per bushel in 1982. Early in the year, a farmer must decide whether he is going to sign up for the program; if he does, he may have to agree to cut back his production to help keep surpluses down. If the eventual market price goes above the loan-rate level, the farmer simply repays the loan, takes back his wheat, and sells it on the open market. But if the market price is below the loan rate, the farmer may take the money and leave the wheat with the government. In addition to the commodity loan, there is a "deficiency payment" that supposedly helps bridge the gap between what the farmer earns in the market and what his crop costs to produce.

It's important to understand two things about this price-support program. First, a guaranteed price is not a guaranteed profit. The loan rates and deficiency payments do not necessarily return the farmer's cost of production, and in recent years they haven't. In 1982, for example, the target price for wheat was more than a dollar less than the farmer's cost of production.

More important, the way these programs work, the more you have, the more the government gives you. A wheat farmer with 250 acres producing 30 bushels per acre gets a support loan of $26,625. A farmer with 2,500 acres of similarly productive land gets approximately ten times that much. The deficiency payments work in pretty much the same way.

For deficiency payments there is a nominal $50,000 cap that in practice does not have much effect. For support loans, there is no limitation at

The Illusions of Conventional Economics

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Unless our farm policy changes, the criticisms that now apply to the nation's automakers—that they are too big, too inflexible, and too inefficient—may one day be appropriate for American agriculture.

all. Thus, while smaller farmers get a little help, the largest farms walk off with a bundle. In a recent editorial attacking all farm subsidies, *The Wall Street Journal* fumed about a midwestern wheat grower who received $68,760 last year from the government yet "rides around his 4,000-acre farm on a huge four-wheel-drive tractor with air conditioning and a radio."

I'll bet the editorial writers of *The Wall Street Journal* have air conditioning, radios, and a whole lot more in their offices; still, they do have a point. As Don Paarlburg, a conservative agricultural economist who toiled in the last three Republican administrations, has put it, the result of the present federal farm program is that "average farm income is increased by adding many dollars to those already well-off and adding little or nothing to those at the low end of the income scale."

This bias toward bigness runs through most of the federal government's farm program. One of the best illustrations is the Farmers Home Administration, a case study of how a federal program that began to help only those in need became a safety net for just about everybody else.

The FmHA was created in the depths of the Depression as a lender of last resort for small and beginning farmers who had a reasonable chance to survive. For most of its life, the agency did serve family farmers struggling to get their operation on its feet and unable to obtain credit elsewhere. But in the 1970s, Congress tacked on something called the Economic Emergency Loan program. To qualify for this new program you didn't have to be small, needy, or even a family farmer. You just had to be in economic trouble. Soon the "economic-emergency" loans were pushing aside the kinds of loans the FmHA was orginally intended to provide. By 1980 FmHA was lending *four times* as much in such "emergency" assistance as it was in the so-called "limited-resource" loans for needy farmers who were now receiving less than ten percent of the agency's total. Ninety percent of these emergency loans went to bigger, more established farms, many of which were unlikely candidates for public philanthropy. One politician and judge with a net worth of $435,000 and a non-farm income of $70,000 a year received $266,000 in such low-interest "emergency" loans.

After "60 Minutes" exposed a $17 million emergency loan to a California agrifactory, an embarrassed Congress imposed a $400,000 limit on the program. Though this was an improvement, the still-generous limit enables the larger farms to eat up the bulk of FmHA's loan resources.

Showing nicely its concept of the "truly needy," the Reagan administration tried to abolish completely the limited-resource loan program that was targeted to the smaller farmers the agency was established to help in the first place. Congress wouldn't let it, so the Reaganites discovered the value of bureaucracy and gave it the red-tape treatment. Nationwide, the FmHA in 1982 managed to lend only about half the money Congress had approved for these loans—this during the worst year for farmers in half a century.

In fairness, the administration has also stopped making economic-emergency loans. But that misses the point. Those loans should be made, but only to family farmers who need them. The FmHA's recent crackdown on delinquent borrowers, moreover, has fallen most heavily upon the smaller farmers. It's a cruel irony: having lavished so much money on the largest farmers, at least some of whom could have gotten credit elsewhere, the government now has too little left for smaller farmers who have nowhere else to turn. Not surprisingly, many are going under.

Meanwhile, the Reagan administration has introduced a Payment-In-Kind program that gives farmers government surplus commodities they in turn can sell, if they agree to take acreage out of

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production. PIK is thus a variation on traditional New Deal programs. But while the PIK program offers many beleaguered farmers some genuine help, it also embodies the same most-for-the-biggest approach.

Agricultural Bloat

Of course, some will argue there's nothing wrong with a farm policy that encourages bigger and bigger farms. This will only make them more efficient, so the argument goes, and past gains in agricultural productivity will continue indefinitely as farms get bigger.

To such people, a concern for the family-size farm seems a mushy and misplaced Jeffersonian nostalgia. In fact, it is anything but. Family farming is practical economics. Anyone who's looked recently at our automobile and steel industries knows that economies of scale stop beyond a certain point. When Thomas Peters and Robert Waterman examined successful American businesses for their book *In Search of Excellence*, what were the qualities they found? Small work units. Lean staffs. A minimum of management bureaucracy. Managers who get their hands into what they manage. Enterprises that stick to their knitting instead of using their assets to flit from one business to another.

It sounds like a profile of the American family farm. It's also a description of what we *lose* when we allow factory-in-the-field agglomerations to gobble up individual family farmers.

There's growing evidence to suggest that in agriculture, as in other endeavors, the old "bigger is better" saying is a myth. A decade ago the Department of Agriculture was telling Congress the optimum size for a California vegetable farm was 400 acres, though 73 percent of the state's vegetables were already produced on farms much larger than that. A 1979 USDA study found that the average U.S. farm reaches 90 percent of maximum efficiency at just 314 acres; to attain 100 percent efficiency, the average size has to quadruple to 1,157 acres. Beyond that, farms don't get any better—they just get bigger. They may even become more bureaucratic and less efficient.

Consider, for example, the matter of debt. The very largest farms are twice as debt-prone as smaller family farms. This is of little consequence when times are flush. But when trouble hits, as it has with Mr. Volcker's interest-rate policies, it's like sending a fleet of large sailing ships heading into a gale with twice the sail they normally carry.

Just as a rope of many strands is more flexible and resilient than a single strand, a diverse agriculture of many relatively small units can adjust and change. Unlike the very largest operations, family farmers don't have so much capital tied up in what they did yesterday to keep them from doing what needs to be done tomorrow. Small farmers don't have to push paper through tedious chains of command. If they see a way of doing something better, they can do it right away. This kind of flexibility is important if sudden shifts in market conditions warrant different crops or production techniques.

There's also the question of rural communities. I grew up in Regent, North Dakota, a farming community of 400 people. Family farms were and are the economic bloodstream of that town. When such farms are eaten up by larger ones, towns like Regent wither, and the government finds itself with a tax-consuming social problem instead of a healthy and tax-providing community.

Illustration by Tom O. Miller

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In short, there is a link between the *way* we have farmed—in traditional family-size units—and the extraordinary productivity of our agriculture as a whole. Yet our farm policies are pushing us towards a top-heavy agriculture that threatens to mimic the same problems we are facing in other areas of our economy. The high interest rates of the last two years have made the problem even worse: whether family farmers go bankrupt or simply decide to sell out, the trend toward concentration is hastened.

Even worse, this trend feeds on itself. The alteration of the FmHA is instructive. Having helped create large farms, the government felt compelled to keep them from failing. When a small family farmer bites the dust there may be a few condolences but nobody worries much. When a multi-thousand-acre agrifactory totters, its bankers and creditors get the jitters over the millions of dollars at stake. It's a prairie twist on the maxim familiar to international bankers: "Make a small loan and you create a debtor. Make a big loan and you create a partner."

Are we encouraging farms so big that we can't afford to let them fail? I fear we are and I think it's an ominous prescription for slowly but inevitably undermining the very things that have made agriculture one of the few American industries still competitive in international markets. Despite high interest rates, agriculture still contributed more than $40 billion in export sales last year, helping defray the costs of our unhappy dependence on imported oil and automobiles.

Help for the Family Farmer

What does all this mean for our farm policies? Mr. Paarlburg recommends that we eliminate the current "tilt in favor of big farms" in our federal programs, and at least keep the playing field level. I agree with that, but would go a step further. For the reasons I've discussed, I think we should retarget the current programs toward family-size units. For example, we should put a cap on the commodity price-support loans to eliminate the exorbitant amounts going to the very largest farmers, thus freeing up more for those who need it more. In 1981, for example, I proposed capping these loans at $150,000, which would have affected less than ten percent of all farmers but would have enabled us to increase the support price by about 35 cents per bushel for the rest. (This new level, incidentally, would have still been below production costs.) Farmers could become as large as they wanted—the federal government just wouldn't pay them for doing so.

We should alter the FmHA loan program in similar fashion, restoring this agency to its original purpose of providing economic opportunity to beginning and smaller farmers. In the present crisis, the money saved should be used to extend loan deferrals to family farmers who have fallen behind on their FmHA loans because of economic circumstances beyond their control. At the same time, we should alter other federal policies, such as tax laws that invite lawyers and doctors to invest in farms as tax shelters, driving up land prices to the detriment of the beginning farmer.

Of course, it would not be fair to pull the plug suddenly on these larger farm operations. Many are essentially family farmers who overextended themselves during the 1970s, with a good deal of encouragement (including subsidized loans) from the government. Some of these farms may need emergency loans; the question is the direction in which our farm program goes from here.

These are the broad outlines of a farm program that I think would dispense agricultural benefits more fairly while promoting the right kind of agriculture. But the high interest rates of the last two years should serve as a stark reminder that the best farm program in the world will not do a great deal when a Federal Reserve Board accountable to no one can unleash an interest-rate tornado that levels the economic landscape. The best thing the government can do for the nation's farmer is not to subsidize him, but to promote the kind of monetary policies that make credit available at a fair price.

Interest rates must continue to fall as they have begun to do. Rates are still too high for the average farmer, however, and powerful pressures are building to increase them again. As I write these words, on March 8, 1983, the front page of *The Washington Post* business section reports that a group of prominent economists called the Shadow Open Market Committee "today called for the Federal Reserve to slow sharply the recent rapid growth in the nation's money supply even though that might risk another recession sometime in 1984."

More than a century ago, President Abraham Lincoln warned us that "the money power of this country will endeavor to prolong its reign until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands and the Republic is destroyed." While its policies have moderated somewhat in recent months, the board has taken us in precisely this direction. Money and credit should serve production, not the other way around. Regaining control over them is of utmost importance not only to the family farmer, but to all independent businessmen as well—not to mention the rest of us. ■

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DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
Department of Regulatory Agencies
Byron D. Wood, Director

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Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Divisions and Offices

FROM: Byron D. Wood, Director
Division of Administrative Services

SUBJECT: Farewell Reception - Executive Director

DATE: February 16, 1983

As you know the Department's Executive Director has resigned effective March 7, 1983. In this regard, the following activities are scheduled:

1. The last staff meeting will be March 2, 1983, 8:30 A.M., Room 617, State Services Building. All those who normally attend the Departmental staff meeting are urged to attend.

2. On March 2, 1983, Room 617, State Services Building, a farewell reception for the Executive Director will be held starting at 1:00 P.M. for all employees of DORA. This occasion is not mandatory but attendance by all is solicited to bid farewell and extend best wishes to our Executive Director. The protocol for this occasion is as follows:

   a. At the time shown below, each Division Director and Office Administrator (ORR and OEC) will enter Room 617, followed by a reception line of the employees of the relevant Division or Office. The Division Director or Office Administrator will stand to the immediate left of the Executive Director and introduce each employee in the reception line to the Executive Director.

   b. The farewell reception schedule is:

1:00 - 1:05	Executive Director's Staff
1:05 - 1:10	ORR
1:10 - 1:20	OEC
1:20 - 1:25	Division of Administrative Services
1:25 - 1:35	Division of Banking
1:35 - 1:45	Division of Civil Rights
1:45 - 1:55	Division of Insurance
1:55 - 2:05	Public Utilities Commission
2:05 - 2:15	Division of Racing
2:15 - 2:20	Division of Real Estate
2:20 - 2:30	Division of Registrations
2:30 - 2:35	Division of Savings and Loan
2:35 - 2:40	Division of Securities

   c. It is important that office and phone coverage be maintained during the period of the farewell reception. Therefore, please make arrangements accordingly.

Please give this your personal attention to assure proper timing and orderly planning for this occasion.

Should you have any questions, please call me.

As always, thank you for your cooperation.

BDW/bv

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The Imperial Ex-Presidency

by Teresa Riordan

When Harry Truman took the train back to Independence, Missouri, in 1953, he paid for his own ticket. And during the first year of his ex-presidency, when his constituents inundated his humble home with letters—more than 70,000 in just the first two weeks after he left office—he paid $30,000 from his own bank account for postage and paper to answer them. It was tough for a former president, Truman complained, "to keep ahead of the hounds," especially without a substantial pension or even the privilege of the frank.

When it finally became clear Harry needed some help, his congressional cronies quietly passed the Former Presidents Act, which provided ex-presidents with a comfortable pension and a "reasonable" allowance for travel, phone bills, staff, and office space and equipment. Harry's former presidency no longer threatened to impoverish him. He was grateful.

Today's ex-presidents have even more reason to be grateful because now when a president leaves office, whether he's voted out, resigns in disgrace, or chooses not to run again, he flies home gratis in Air Force One. And the American taxpayer gives him and his vice president $1 million in moving expenses. (Not bad—know any other employers who pay moving expenses for someone they've just fired?)

Until 1964 it was up to the outgoing president to truck his belongings home. But when John Kennedy was assasinated, Congress appropriated money to defray the cost of his funeral. One-time funeral expenses quickly turned into a costly tradition known as "transition."

Transition costs aren't the only ones that have soared in the past two decades. Truman never billed the government a cent for travel; when he and Bess decided to pay a summer visit to Washington they drove their own car from Missouri. This year the government will pay its three ex-presidents $32,000 each just for travel. When the ex-president and his wife first returned to Independence, tourists trampled the Truman home, undeterred by so much as a single Secret Service agent; when Lady Bird Johnson recently decided to sunbathe in the Mediterranean, 12 Secret Service agents cruised alongside her. And the most Truman ever charged the government for office space was $4,500 in 1968; today ex-president Nixon's office in New York City costs the taxpayer $73,000 a year.

Between the $70,000-a-year pensions for three ex-presidents, the upkeep of their elaborate presidential libraries, and assorted other perks, from free health care to free stays at a Lafayette Square townhouse whenever they're in Washington, the government will fork over $27 million this year—a 40-fold increase since 1965 and more than it costs to maintain the White House operation. What started as a perfectly reasonable goal—shielding ex-presidents from the throes of poverty—has mushroomed into all the trappings of an Imperial Ex-Presidency.

Take, for example, former president Gerald Ford (please, he's getting rather expensive). Ford, corporate-board virtuoso that he is, raked in more than $900,000 in 1981, according to *Newsweek*, by lending his name to seven corporate boards. Ford

Teresa Riordan is on the staff of The Washington Monthly. *Pierre Audin assisted in the research of this article.*

Illustration by La Mouche

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also received hefty fees for business consulting and speech-making, the latter of which sometimes reach the $20,000 range. As for pensions, Ford is a triple-dipper. On top of his presidential pension, he gets two more monthly checks for having served in the Navy and in Congress. Truman, incidentally, rejected at least a half-dozen corporate-board offers when he left office. "They were not interested in hiring Harry Truman the person," he said later. "It was the former president of the United States they wanted."

Ford certainly must know that major corporations don't ask him to sit on their board of directors because he is a former congressman from Grand Rapids, Michigan. There's nothing necessarily wrong with that; if major league ball players can hawk underwear and video recorders, why shouldn't a former chief executive pull in a few extra dollars by trading on his presidential aura? The real question is a different one. Why should the government underwrite landscaping and swimming pool maintenance at Ford's Palm Springs office when he's making almost $1 million a year?

The General Services Administration has allocated Ford $330,000 for 1983, including $32,000 for telephone bills, $57,000 for office space (swimming pool included here within), and $32,000 for travel. True, the government pays for Ford's travel only when he makes official trips such as the one to Sadat's funeral. If Ford flies to Ann Arbor for a speech with a $15,000 honorarium attached, he foots the bill for his plane ticket. The government, however, picks up the tab for his advance man, another staff member who travels with Ford, Ford's round-the-clock Secret Service protection, the salary of Ford's appointments secretary, and perhaps even the paper the speech was written on and the typewriter it was written with. A trip like that, according to a conservative estimate made at a congressional hearing in 1979, probably costs taxpayers about $16,000. It would be cheaper to pay Jerry the honorarium and tell him to stay home.

Ford certainly isn't the only ex-president with reason to be grateful to his fomer employer. Carter used two word processors paid for by the government (his and hers, one for Rosalynn) at $12,000 a year to write his memoirs—memoirs that are expected to earn millions for private citizen Carter. And when 30 copies of *Keeping Faith* were water-damaged while sitting in his government-rented, $58,000-a-year office in the Richard B. Russell federal building in Atlanta, Carter applied for reimbursement from the government—and got it.

THE KEEPER OF THE PERKS

William Fontaine is a life-long bureaucrat in a rather unenviable position. He is the administrator at the General Services Administration who plays referee between ex-presidents and the taxpayers footing the bills. When Nixon said he'd found an office at almost $40 a square foot in New York City's Chrysler building, it was Fontaine who told him "No, Mr. President—but why don't you try a federal building at $13 a square foot instead?" Nixon grumbled but agreed. "It's not everyday a bureaucrat gets to say 'no' to a former president," says Fontaine.

Fontaine's all-too-rare bureaucratic job is doubly difficult because he and the GSA have no guidelines to help them determine whether ex-presidential expenditures are extravagant. The Former Presidents Act says only that the GSA administrator should provide "suitable office space appropriately equipped with furniture, furnishings, office machines and equipment, and office supplies, as determined by the administrator." The language of the rest of the act is similarly vague. Without specified dollar amounts, it's tough to figure out what is "suitable." "Is a $500 coffee table suitable, or is a $1,000 coffee table suitable?" asks Fontaine. "The problem is they always get the architects and the interior designers who want everything first class. I don't like guessing what's right."

When Carter was furnishing his office, Fontaine turned down a request for a $10,000 Turkish rug and bought the ex-president one for $7,000 instead. Perhaps the question Congress should be asking itself—not Fontaine or the GSA—is not whether the rug should cost $10,000 or $7,000 but whether the government should buy Carter a Turkish rug at all.

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The perks outlined so far have been legislated specifically by Congress. But ex-presidents have found other ways to continue living in the style to which they have become accustomed. Bill Gulley, director of the White House Military Office under LBJ, describes in *Breaking Cover* how Johnson arranged to have his favorite stewards and his favorite chili cook transferred to Bergstrom Air Force Base, near his ranch, soon after he left office. His favorite barber at Bergstrom continued to make house calls to the ranch. LBJ also used the base commissary and PX, and a helicopter was stationed at Bergstrom to shuttle him between Austin and the ranch. A Navy lieutenant who gave LBJ and Lady Bird rubdowns also was transferred to Bergstrom. He doubled as Johnson's ranch hand and, three years after LBJ died, says Gulley, the lieutenant was still there—and still on the Navy payroll.

SECRET SERVANTS

By far the biggest financial burden borne by Americans in the name of ex-presidents is Secret Service protection. It cost $11.7 million last year to shadow former presidents and their families. Eligible for these $30,000-a-year-plus bodyguards are ex-presidents, their wives and widows (until they remarry), and children under 16. (Children of present presidents get Secret Service protection regardless of age, which explains why 37-year-old Michael Reagan, who has a recognition factor ideal for an American Express commercial, had 19 agents tagging along on a 1982 family vacation to the British Isles.) And when it comes to protection, the Secret Service is not one to skimp. On a private visit to London last October to promote *Keeping Faith*, Carter was accompanied by 12 Secret Service agents, each of whom was comfortably lodged in the Churchill Hotel at $125 a night.

It was JFK's assassination that put the Secret Service in the business of protecting former presidents and their families. Protection for former first ladies when first enacted in 1964 applied only to Jacqueline Kennedy and her children and was authorized for just two years. In 1965 the protection was expanded to include all first ladies for four years. In 1968 this was changed to life. Small wonder that in 18 short years the cost of Secret Service protection of former presidents has shot up more than *200 times*—up from $50,000 in 1965, even though we have just as many ex-presidents as we did 20 years ago when Truman had Dwight Eisenhower and Herbert Hoover to keep him company.

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The safety of former presidents is, of course, of concern to the American people. But one has to question how much protection is necessary and how much is simply an entourage mirage designed to preserve a president's imperial image after he's left office. And if it's that important to protect family members, why did Jacqueline Kennedy suddenly stop needing protection when she remarried, while Mamie Eisenhower needed three Secret Service agents to escort her to church every morning until she died at the age of 83?

Presidents and their family members usually protest that they have no choice in the matter, and there's a little truth to that. Mamie once commented she didn't need Secret Service agents peeping into her bedroom at four in the morning to see that she was safely tucked in; what she really needed (and essentially got, in triplicate) was just one person to drive her to church and run errands.

Lady Bird Johnson, when asked to comment for a Senate hearing on the necessity of her Secret Service protection, replied that its continuance should be left up to Congress... "although I have welcomed and been very deeply grateful for the outstanding protection Congress has afforded me through this fine organization—as when they awakened me in the middle of the night a few weeks ago to evacuate my apartment because of a fire in the building."

So Mamie needed a chauffeur and Lady Bird needed a smoke alarm. But do they both need a detail of Secret Service agents protecting them 24 hours a day? In the history of the United States there have been no assassination attempts on the family members of former presidents and only one assassination attempt on a former president—Teddy Roosevelt when he was in the midst of another presidential campaign, running in 1912 on the Bull Moose ticket. And if Gerald Ford thinks he needs a bodyguard to protect him from harm when he ventures out on the rubber chicken-and-peas circuit, why can't *he* pay for it? Would taxpayers be betraying a sacred promise if they told ex-presidents we'll help if you need it—but until then you're on your own?

These are questions few raise. Nixon, Ford, and Carter aren't about to look a gift horse in the mouth; after having been forced into early retirement, they probably think such treatment is only fair. Besides, if you're used to stepping off airplanes to strains of martial music, then plunging into a crowd of frantic journalists and waiting dignitaries, it's disconcerting to walk unnoticed out of an airport terminal and hail your own cab. However much presidents complain while in office about their lack of privacy and free time, they probably feel more comfortable having a few presidential attendants around when they leave. That's why Nixon, who wanted his protection slashed while he was in office musing that "one man is as good against a threat as a hundred," today still has a full-time Secret Service detail.

Congress could start dismantling the Imperial Ex-Presidency by cutting its funding. Senator Lawton Chiles has proposed just that for the past four years. The trouble is, many congressmen are highly conscious of their own perks as well as a little envious of perks ex-presidents are allowed. Congressmen are notorious complainers when it comes to their $69,800-a-year salaries, sensing a grating discrepancy between their remuneration and their notions of self-importance. Voting themselves special tax breaks can help compensate for this perceived injustice; so can joining ex-presidents in comfortable retirement. Carl Albert, for example, pulls in an $85,000 pension—$20,000 more than he received while speaker of the House and $15,000 more than ex-presidents get. The generosity also extends to bereaved widows, destitute or not. Lindy Boggs, the wife of the late Hale Boggs, gets a widow's pension of over $40,000 (president's widows get only $20,000); meanwhile, she gets another $69,800 a year because she occupies her husband's old congressional seat.

This helps explain why a little low-key lobbying by former first families and their friends is usually enough to keep congressional budget cutters at bay. Last October, while Chiles's bill was being considered in committee, Thomas Eagleton, the senior senator from Missouri, made an impassioned plea for his constituent Bess Truman, then seriously ill in a hospital. Emotion triumphed. Committee members scrambled to Eagleton's side, as if opposing the reductions would have cut off the former first lady's life-support systems.

Chiles's bill is back again this session, but nobody's betting on it. The present administration, ostensibly bent on cutting profligate government spending, is drawing the line on this one. David Stockman, in a letter stating the administration's opposition to curbing former presidential costs wrote, "The bill's authorization of $750,000 [for transition expenses now funded at $1 million] to the outgoing president and vice president... is unreasonably low." After all, it's not cheap to ship china to California these days. ■

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WHO'S WHO in the Administration

There can be little comfort for **Caspar Weinberger** in the inside story of the appointment of **Paul Thayer** as his deputy. Thayer was selected by the White House, according to our source, because the White House wanted "its own man" at the Pentagon. Weinberger was not consulted on the original decision. However, he did see Thayer before the appointment was announced and probably still had enough power at that point to veto it. But the fact that he was not consulted originally seems a clear indication that his power is declining.

What were **Ronald Reagan, George Shultz, Caspar Weinberger, William Clark, Donald Regan, Edwin Meese , James Baker , Michael Deaver**, and **William French Smith** doing together last month? Pondering the latest jobs bill proposal? Drafting an important cable to Moscow? Hardly. These men—the top four Cabinet officers and the top four White House staff members—were on board the royal yacht *Britannia* with **Queen Elizabeth** and **Prince Philip**.

All the fuss about the queen's visit once again reveals how official Washington can transform ritual social events into matters of almost sublime importance. What's more, the press is just as guilty as the public officials they often criticize for falling victim to such blandishments. A **Washington Post** reporter scorchingly wrote about Frank Sinatra and other tacky people pressuring to get invitations to the queen's party in California. A couple of weeks earlier that same reporter spent 20 minutes on the phone berating a White House aide because she had not been invited to another of the royal parties.

The **Los Angeles Times** didn't behave much better. One of its Powers That Be was practically sobbing when he complained to the White House about not getting an invitation. It seems that when his wife ran into Jill St. John in a Rodeo Drive parking lot, St. John was "shocked" that the wife hadn't been invited and the wife was "just totally humiliated by the whole thing.". . .

One more sign for the political augurers that Ronald Reagan intends to seek a second term: **George Bush**'s savvy political operative, **Pete Teeley**, has decided to take a leave of absence to write a novel. Meanwhile, OMB insiders report that **David Stockman** shows every sign of a man who wants to hold on to his job.

In

WHITE HOUSE
Chief adviser on Soviet and East European Affairs—**John Lenczowski** has been a special adviser for security affairs at the State Department.

DEFENSE
Army Chief of Staff—**General John A. Wickham Jr.** has been the Army vice chief of staff.

Pentagon Comptroller—**Vincent Puritano** has been executive assistant to the deputy defense secretary.

LABOR
Deputy Undersecretary for Intergovernmental Affairs—**Paul Russo** has been a special assistant to President Reagan.

STATE
Ambassador to Guinea-Bissau—**Wesley W. Egan** has been deputy chief of the U.S. mission in Zambia.

Ambassador to Switzerland—**John D. Lodge** has been ambassador to Spain and to Argentina.

USIA
Deputy Director, Voice of America—**Melvyn Levitsky** has been senior deputy assistant secretary of state for human rights.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS
Assistant Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency—**Lee Thomas** has been associate director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Inspector General, EPA—**Charles L. Dempsey** has been inspector general of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Director of Bureau of Competition, Federal Trade Commission—**Timothy J. Muris** has been director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection.

Director of Bureau of Economics, Federal Trade Commission—**Wendy Lee Gramm** has been assistant director for consumer protection of the Bureau of Economics.

Out

AGRICULTURE
Minority Affairs Director—**Isidoro Rodriguez** has been fired.

DEFENSE
Pentagon Comptroller—**Jack Borsting** will become dean of the school of business administration at the University of Miami.

JUSTICE
Associate Attorney General—**Rudolph W. Giuliani** will be nominated as U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York.

AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS
Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency—**Anne M. Burford** has resigned.

Inspector General—**Matthew Novick** has been fired.

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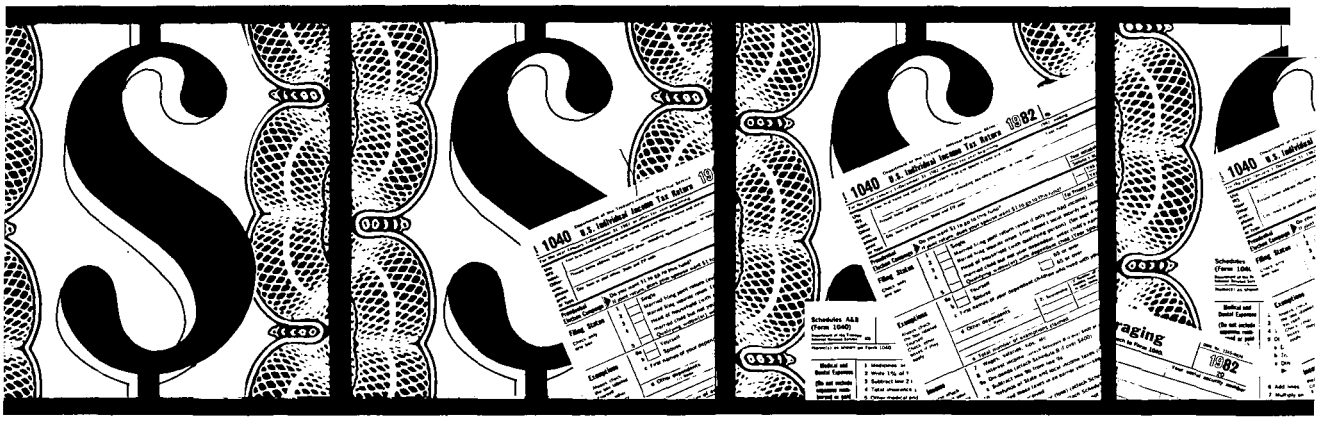

If April really is the cruelest month, it's not just because of the inevitability of you-know-what. Almost as bad as paying federal income taxes is having to endure all the newspaper and television reports whining about who collects them: the Internal Revenue Service. This is the month everyone takes aim at the IRS, from civil libertarians outraged about invasions of privacy to standard-issue libertarians outraged about taxes period. At this very moment, any newspaper editor worth his salt is on the lookout for that "IRS Hounds Elderly Widow for $2.49" story.

Given the season, it probably sounds downright uncouth to recommend that it's time to give the IRS a lot more power in its efforts to confiscate the hard-earned money of certain taxpayers. These aren't taxpayers who deal drugs or manipulate convoluted tax shelters, nor are they high-ranking political appointees or powerful multinational corporations. Most are quite typical people—the young college graduate who works in your office, the prosperous small businessman you just had lunch with. Maybe you're one of them yourself.

All of these taxpayers have one thing in common: they're cheating the government. They're not, however, cheating on their taxes. Their scam is somewhat different—yet no less effective in depriving the government of its rightful due.

Richard Meyer is a Washington writer.

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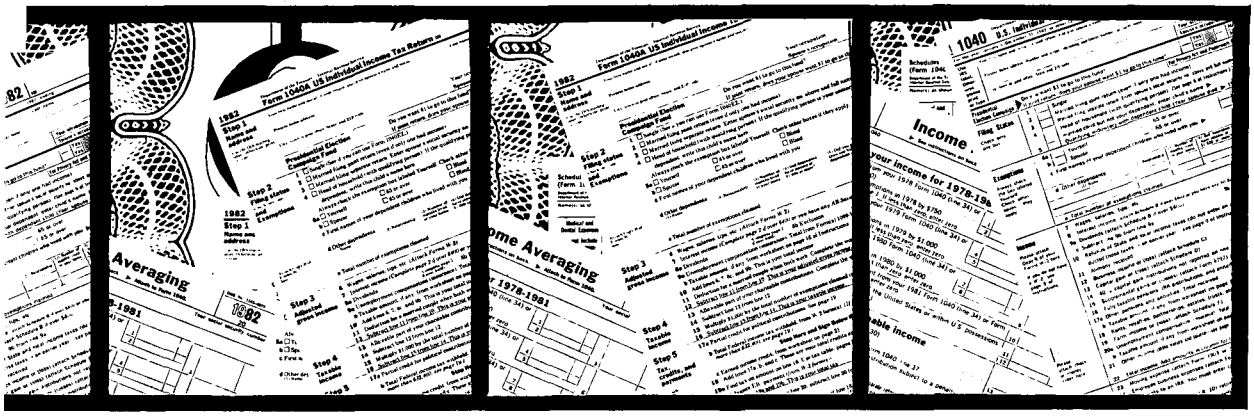

Debt, where is thy sting?

by Richard Meyer

Each year the U.S. Treasury gives about $44 billion in direct and guaranteed loans to its citizens, generally for commendable purposes: helping students get college educations and technical training; providing small businessmen with capital to expand and produce new jobs; helping farmers muddle through a bad year. In direct loans alone, Americans owe the government more than a quarter-trillion dollars. This makes the U.S. Treasury by far the nation's largest single bank. Unfortunately, it's also far and away the most incompetently run.

Americans owe nearly $40 billion in overdue government loans. Some delinquent borrowers have valid excuses—for example, a small businessman entangled in Chapter 11 proceedings. But hundreds of thousands of debtors fall into a different category: ungrateful deadbeats who are guessing (often correctly) that their loan file is gathering dust in some forgotten warehouse while they devote their financial resources to higher priorities—like buying a new car or a vacation home.

Of the beneficiaries of the government's several dozen loan programs, the most brazen deadbeats are the college-educated. More than 12 percent of all Guaranteed Student Loans are in default (meaning that payments are more than 120 days overdue); for National Direct Student Loans the figure is 16 percent. The champion of them all is the Health Professions Student Loan program, which dishes out money to future doctors, dentists, and nurses. Their default rate is 29 percent.

The bad debt rolls show no prejudice with regard to pedigree, title, or annual income. When a U.S. attorney in Los Angeles recently released the names of 90 delinquent borrowers, the list included several doctors, lawyers, and a prominent television newscaster. One graduate of Harvard Medical School who went on to teach at a midwestern university finally paid up his $7,100 when faced with the prospect of having a lien placed on his $100,000 vacation home in Massachusetts. The Department of Education estimates that 46,000 defaulters are working for the federal government—stiffing the same government that's now paying their salaries. One of DOE's own $36,000-a-year bureaucrats defaulted on his student loan in 1973 and was finally ordered to pay up by a court in 1979. He refused, pleading financial hardship—though last July he managed to buy an $18,000 Porsche.

Why are the government's books rife with such ingrates? Largely because collecting money is one of the last things most government agencies like to do. When former Comptroller General Elmer Staats remarked "debt collection is not really fun; it's a lot more fun to dispense money," he was making a point known well to congressmen and bureaucrats alike. Shaking down debtors not only isn't pleasant, traditionally there's been nothing in it for the lender. Bad debts usually don't result in

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The best way to recover the government's bad debts avoids collection agencies, lawsuits, and more bureaucracy: let the IRS deduct overdue loan payments from tax refunds.

cuts in an agency's budget, and oftentimes the money collected ends up in the U.S. Treasury's general accounts. Moreover, the responsibility for administering these loan programs often has been delegated to intermediaries—universities and banks in the case of student loans—who know the government will reimburse them anyway for almost everything they can't collect.

The government's negligence will be less blatant in the future. Universities with too many bad loans now risk cutbacks on future loans. The Debt Collection Act, passed in 1982 largely due to the efforts of Senator Charles Percy, authorizes the government to deduct up to 15 percent of a federal employee's paycheck to repay an old loan. It will also help ensure, for the first time, that defaulting on a government loan will hurt your credit rating. Finally, government agencies and universities in recent years have begun to hire collection agencies that will pursue and presumably harass delinquent borrowers with unpleasant phone calls and legal notices.

Unfortunately, these much-needed reforms can't touch the bulk of the government's bad debt. The Department of Education, for example, has used collection agencies since 1981, but they've been able to collect less than eight percent of what they've been assigned. As a last resort the department has referred more than 30,000 debt cases to the Department of Justice for prosecution, but almost all have been ignored, and for a simple reason: to pursue repayment would cost more than the loans are worth.

The Dangerfield Factor

Leave it to the federal government to ignore the most effective, not to mention cheapest, way to handle the problem. As Percy and others have suggested, the IRS should be given the responsibility for collecting these overdue loan payments. If this conjures up images of some modern-day Sheriffs of Nottingham barging into your home in the middle of the night to put a lien on your jewelry, relax. The IRS can collect these debts by doing nothing more than reprogramming its computers.

The new instructions? For existing debtors, the IRS should tell its computers to stop issuing checks to the same people the government is trying to collect from. This may sound nonsensical until you realize that almost 80 percent of the taxpayers receive tax refunds each year. A specific breakdown of defaulters hasn't been done, but studies by the General Accounting Office suggest that well over half fall in this category. So while the federal government's left hand is having trouble getting into the debtor's pocket, its right hand is busy depositing more dollars into his checking account.

Congress could stop this stupidity tomorrow simply by authorizing the IRS to deduct delinquent payments from debtors' tax refunds. Such an "offset" would occur only after the lending agency has exhausted normal collection means and the borrower is given legal notice that informs him how to contest the action if he desires. An offset program in Virginia, for example, gives a taxpayer 30 days to lodge a protest or pay his bill; if he doesn't, the state assumes the debtor has waived his right to the refund, and it claims the money.

Delinquent borrowers who didn't receive refunds are a second category. Admittedly they would be more difficult to reach, since any attempt to levy an additional tax on their earnings would be subject to adjudication. The best approach to recover debts from this minority of borrowers would be aggressive prosecution in the courts.

The third category—future loan recipients—would be the easiest for the IRS to handle. If a student, small businessman, or other potential borrower solicited a new loan from the government, he would have to sign a form that specifically allowed the IRS to offset his refund, or, if he had none, to levy a fair and reasonable surcharge on top of his normal income tax. This prior consent would eliminate any danger of litigation; if a citizen protested, the government could simply offer directions to the nearest bank. No doubt some people would decry this agreement as "coercive"; they need only be reminded that the government has never been under any obligation to loan the money in the first place.

The benefits from this approach would be substantial. The General Accounting Office, evaluating an offset program just for *existing* delinquent borrowers in the student loan pro-

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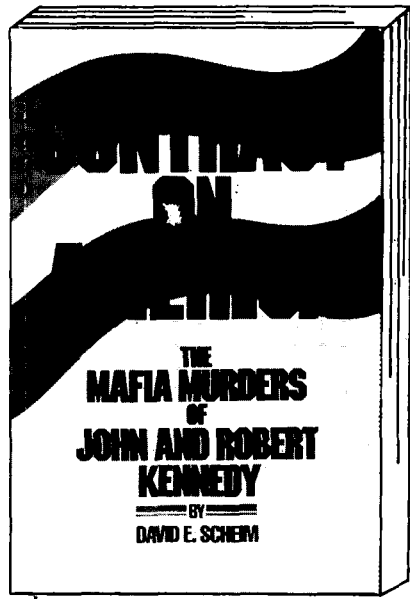
gram, has calculated that the Department of Education could collect an additional $225 million a year. If the offset worked as well for all government agencies, the total take could be several billion dollars a year.

Sensible as it sounds, the idea does have one major drawback: the IRS wants nothing to do with it. IRS officials claim that any attempt to collect delinquent loans would endanger something known as "voluntary compliance," or the willingness of Americans to report diligently and correctly all their income to the government. The IRS says this change would encourage taxpayers to find ways—legal and illegal—to reduce their tax payments, making it harder for the IRS to collect.

IRS officials have relied on this argument in recent years to quietly lobby Congress to shelve the idea. They've been successful. When Senator James Sasser suggested a $1 million appropriation in 1979 for a pilot program for the offset, the agency let it be known it didn't want the extra money for that purpose. An agitated Daniel Patrick Moynihan weighed in during the debate on the matter. "Do not," he intoned, "let a petty annoyance with post-teenagers who may not have paid their bills jeopardize this extraordinary institution of trust and reciprocity between citizens and their government."

The argument seems reasonable—until you look a little closer and see logical holes that would accommodate the passage of a good-sized senator. According to the argument, if a taxpayer who's already defaulted on a $5,000 student loan knows that the IRS will deduct a healthy portion of his tax refund, he'll either cheat outright or legally reduce his tax withholdings to avoid even having a refund. But wait a minute—if he cheats on his taxes, he's simply compounding his sin against the government, making himself vulnerable to the far harsher penalties of violating U.S. tax laws. As for eliminating a tax refund, people usually get refunds by itemizing. Those who itemize are trying to convince the government they should be reimbursed for money they've already spent. Does the IRS seriously believe that a delinquent debtor will eliminate all his tax-deductible expenditures or spend the money anyway but never seek reimbursement for the rest of his taxpaying days? Chances are much better he'll get on the phone right away to the Department of Education and try to work out some sort of deal.

The IRS's logic is even weaker in the case of new loans for which the borrower would sign the IRS waiver. Cheating on his return wouldn't help a bit; if the debtor got no refund, the IRS would simply levy an additional tax. Refusal to pay *that* would be an open-and-shut case of tax evasion.



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Pressed on the matter, IRS officials admit their concerns are largely speculative. And no wonder, given all the evidence suggesting that this approach to debt collection would work just fine. Oregon, one of at least eight states with such a program, instituted a refund offset in 1971. Withholding patterns have not changed noticeably: 75 to 80 percent of those who file state income tax returns still get refunds. Robyn Godwin, director of the state's Department of Revenue, says Oregon takes in $30 for every $1 it spends on the program. Godwin sees no reason an offset program wouldn't be just as effective for the federal government.

Corroborating evidence comes from the IRS itself. For the past year, the agency has been docking the refunds of parents who've been delinquent on child-support payments in an effort to reduce welfare costs. The program doesn't seem to have undermined "voluntary compliance," though IRS officials insist it's too early to draw any conclusions.

The IRS, however, feels strongly about what its job should be, and it doesn't include collecting the bad debts of the Department of Education and a

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dozen other federal agencies. One important reason is bureaucratic indifference. Keeping tabs on delinquent borrowers would not involve much extra work—certainly less than the IRS endures by collecting dividend and interest statements from the nation's banks each quarter. But it's work, nonetheless, and it's for the purpose of saving money for another agency's program. To most IRS officials, it's just not worth the bother.

Even so, the IRS's behavior violates one of the most fundamental bureaucratic imperatives: to expand one's territory whenever possible. And while it is Congress and not the IRS that defines the agency's purpose, the former has shown a surprising amount of deference on the subject—even though it's meant that the government has forgone a great deal of money.

Something else lies behind the government's hesitation in going after the big money. Cut through all the specious arguments, including Moynihan's fear that the program might set a precedent obligating the government to collect the debts of "bookmakers, used-car dealers, and savings and loans associations," and one realizes that the IRS craves the same thing Rodney Dangerfield does—some respect. Debt collection is a threat, not because it will make taxpayers hate the agency more but because it may make them realize how much of a paper tiger it really is.

Indeed, the "extraordinary trust and reciprocity" between the agency and its public has been looking pretty ragged lately. In the last decade the revenues lost each year through underreporting have, by the IRS's own estimates, tripled to nearly $90 billion a year and are expected to reach $120 billion by 1985. Some people are cheating out of prudence (drug dealers, for example), while others offer ostensibly ideological reasons (tax protestors). But an increasing number of Americans are cheating for a simpler reason: they've learned they can get away with it. Congress has unwittingly aided the cheating by reducing IRS appropriations; while 2.5 percent of all tax returns were audited in 1977, last year the agency managed to get through barely half as many. Put another way: If you're among the half of all taxpayers who make less than $25,000 a year, your odds of getting audited are about one in 80.

So when one high-ranking IRS official under Carter observes that "the Service has serious image problems and this [debt collection] could further damage it," his real worry is not that it will so enrage honest taxpayers that they'll turn into cheaters. He'd just as soon not give people another excuse for testing the IRS's meager defenses.

Congress has used the same excuse. Dan Rostenkowski, chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, was instrumental in vetoing the efforts of Percy and Representative James Jeffords to pass the offset. He parroted the IRS's worry in a letter to a colleague: "In this new era of limited resources, it is the responsibility of the Ways and Means Committee, in its oversight capacity, to insure effective and efficient tax administration on the part of the IRS. Given the increasing complexity of our tax laws, the evidence of declining tax compliance among U.S. taxpayers, and ever more austere budgets for the IRS, I am most reluctant to entertain new responsibilities for the Service that are unrelated to its primary mission and would require actions that may adversely affect tax compliance."

That deserves a translation: Because Congress has short-changed the IRS enforcement budget (to the delight, no doubt, of its constituents), the agency should avoid the most effective way to collect billions the government would otherwise lose.

Getting Tough

There's no doubt about it—the IRS has its work cut out for it in improving "voluntary compliance." But worrying about "image" is hardly the way to do it. The way to regain respect is to convince people—for example, through a system of thorough but random tax audits—that if they try to cheat the government, there's a good chance they'll get caught. And if the IRS's debt collection program tempts some taxpayers to cheat, their success will not be due to the new program, but to the agency's failure to detect them.

What the IRS fails to recognize is that an effective debt collection program would make its job even easier. In the end, people don't pay taxes because they want to or because they wholeheartedly endorse all the ways their money is being used. They pay because they fear the consequences of being caught. Collecting delinquent loan payments from tax payments would infuriate some people, but it could also force them to have more respect for the government's perseverence. The IRS should realize that reducing loan cheating is a good place to begin in trying to reduce tax cheating as well. After all, millions of Americans have learned they can cheat the government with impunity when it comes to repaying their loans. Is it any wonder so many are doing the same thing when it comes to filling out their tax returns? ■

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TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES

New depositers do not, however, get free toasters

Several years ago many corporations routinely underpaid their taxes because IRS penalties were so low that it was more lucrative to invest the money elsewhere. USA Today *reports that many corporations are now deliberately overpaying their taxes because it's one of the best investments around. The IRS pays up to 17.4 percent upon repayment. In 1983 it expects to spend almost $2 billion in such interest charges.*

Physician, Deduct Thyself

A recent solicitation mailed to "selected members of the medical community" invites doctors to subscribe to Prentice Hall's *Doctors Tax Report*. "Many doctors lose a fortune in deductions simply because they aren't aware of the many tax breaks just waiting to be exploited," the letter explains. "Like nailing down big deductions for a "night on the town." And professional gifts. Auto expenses. Office decor. Club dues. Charitable and medical trips. Educational "commuting." Office space at home. Moving expenses. A quiet business meal. The list goes on and on.

Interspersed with testimonials ("When Dr. S's tax bracket hit 50 percent, Dr. S. hit the ceiling") are promises of building "new wealth from raw land, condos, cooperatives, rental properties," driving "away with more and bigger auto deductions," and parlaying "the new Accelerated Cost Recovery System into a fortune in tax write-offs—even if your property was placed in service before the 1981 effective date." "Let's face it," the letter says. "They don't teach taxes in medical school."

The cost of the biweekly newsletter, $191 a year, is "fully deductible."

The Cheapest Distance Between Two Points: Washington to Nashville to Dallas to Springfield

Below is a list of air fares and mileages from Washington, D.C., to selected American cities. The fares assume no advance purchase requirements or restrictions on length of stay. There are no typographical errors.

Washington to Louisville, Ky. (round-trip)	**$316**	**601 miles**
Washington to Los Angeles (round-trip)	**$249**	**2,646 miles**
Washington to Los Angeles (one-way, direct)	**$399**	**2,646 miles**
Washington to Springfield, Mo. (round-trip)	**$424**	**1,013 miles**
Washington to Dallas (round-trip via Nashville)	**$235**	**1,318 miles**
Washington to Fargo, N.D. (round-trip)	**$512**	**1,329 miles**
Washington to Minneapolis (round-trip)	**$198**	**1,090 miles**

"Let them die in the streets," said Dr. M. Antoinette

After the University of South Alabama Medical Center closed its emergency room to indigent patients, all but one of the six remaining hospitals in Mobile closed their emergency rooms on weekends to poor patients.

What he really meant to say was that the B-52s weren't old *enough*

Throughout the 1980 campaign, presidential candidate Ronald Reagan criticized the nation's B-52s, referring to pilots having to fly in "20-year-old bombers that their fathers flew before them." As president, Reagan has pushed hard for bringing 40-year-old battleships out of mothballs and refitting them for combat.

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Liberals: The NRA's Best Friends

by Leslie Gould, Jr.

Americans, according to long-standing wisdom, love only one thing more fervently than their automobiles: their guns. More than 50 million of us own some kind of firearm, from derringers to high-powered rifles, and many treat gun ownership with a reverence usually reserved for theological matters. In some parts of the country a challenge to a person's religious or political beliefs will elicit little more than an indifferent shrug; let the phrase "gun control" creep into the conversation and a heated argument is guaranteed.

Guns arouse different but no less heartfelt passions among many who don't own one. It's still painful to recite a list of victims: a president, his brother, a civil rights leader, a renowned musician. Among liberals in particular, the issue of gun control is also a tenet of faith, involving more than a desire to stop senseless violence and reduce crime. To these people, the nation's affinity for guns epitomizes the dark side of America's character; in their crusade lies the hope of redeeming the nation's troubled soul.

Last November these passions clashed head-on when California residents voted on an initiative that called for a ban on new handgun sales and a freeze on the number of existing handguns, along with a guarantee that no further restrictions would be placed on rifles and shotguns. Proposition 15 supporters cited the dismaying statistics: over 10,000 murders in America in 1979, compared to only 55 in England and 48 in Japan, where handguns are effectively prohibited. Opponents of the measure (led by the National Rifle Association) portrayed it as an assault on their constitutional rights and trotted out the familiar bromides, such as, "Guns Don't Kill People, People Kill People." Both sides had plenty of money to spend ($2 million for supporters, about twice that for opponents), and compared with many other 1982 races it was a relatively clean fight. In the end, Proposition 15 got creamed: 4.7 million votes to 2.8 million. And while the NRA gloated, the initiative's sponsors despaired of ever getting the country to recognize what they considered "common sense."

I would have voted for Proposition 15 had I lived in California; I thought it was a reasonable compromise that would have slowed the proliferation of handguns used largely by criminals while protecting legitimate gun owners. But I also understand why the initiative lost, and lost badly, and why similar campaigns in the future are

Leslie Gould Jr. is a writer living in Maine.

Illustration by Andy Myer

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A potent weapon in the NRA's campaign to prevent reasonable handgun control is the visible contempt so many gun control advocates have, not for guns themselves, but for the people who use them.

probably doomed to failure. It's not that the NRA is omnipotent (after all, its 2.5 million members represent only five percent of all gun owners). Nor is it that Americans are a uniquely violent and paranoid people. Nor is it even that Americans oppose gun control; polls consistently show they favor the concept. I think the explanation is quite different—and more painful to contemplate. I'm convinced that gun control will get nowhere as long as so many of its adherents remain as ignorant, narrow-minded, and prejudiced as they accuse their gun-toting antagonists of being. It's time to recognize that one of NRA's most potent weapons in its misguided campaign to prevent reasonable gun control is the visible contempt that so many gun control advocates have, not for guns themselves, but for the people who use them responsibly and enjoy them.

Rifled Feathers

I am a hunter (though a lapsed one), and the people I know who hunt are hardly the backwoods sociopaths depicted by James Dickey in *Deliverance* or the fanatically anti-communist superpatriots often featured in newspaper and television stories. These hunters are admittedly more conservative than liberal, but they are hardly New Right; many are Democrats, as are nearly half the members of the NRA.

Although the enthusiasm for hunting is not shared by a majority of Americans, here in Maine, as in most of the rural areas of the country, hunting is considered as much a part of the natural scheme of things as gardening, heating with wood, or shoveling snow. Children grow up with hunting stories and endless musings on the vagaries of wild animals and the men and women who pursue them, and they become familiar with the use of firearms at an early age. Even those who don't hunt appreciate their neighbors' way of life. During the fall hunting season, one of the most common greetings is "Got your deer yet?" The expression assumes both a sense of familiarity and of common interest. Even though I no longer hunt, I am still included in this common cultural heritage, the assumption being that if I live in the country I must at least be interested in hunting.

Hunting is also a reflection of some larger, communal values. It is a long-established belief, dating to the colonial ordinance of 1641-47, that an individual has a right to hunt just about anywhere. There is no quicker way for a new resident to alienate his neighbors than to "post his land" by putting up "No Hunting" signs. The act of hunting itself is also a democratizing experience. A favorite genre of stories in Maine features out-of-state hunters who flaunt their affluence and sophisticated gear—and proceed to get lost as soon as they step into the woods. Hunters have told me what they most enjoy about hunting is the chance to feel they are on the same footing as everyone else—strangers, relatives, bosses—even if it's for only a few weeks each fall.

There are many people here who hunt out of necessity. The Department of Labor ranks Maine as one of the poorest of all states; 17 percent of the households live below the poverty line, most of them in rural areas where government assistance programs are less accessible (for reasons of both pride and physical distance) than they are in cities. For many families, venison is the most common meat on the table, and it is a near-universal belief here that to kill an animal and not consume its meat is unpardonable. It's not uncommon for game wardens to give confiscated game to poor families, just as private charities in large cities donate turkeys and canned goods to the needy.

But the major reason people hunt is the pleasure it brings them, a pleasure that is difficult to describe to those who've never ventured into the

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woods or onto a marsh with a rifle or shotgun in hand. In my waterfowling days I loved the whole feel of it: the scrunching down in the marsh grass in the early morning darkness, head lowered (so my face wouldn't reflect the light); the smell of the mudflats and the sea; the flow of adrenaline as I heard the quacking of the ducks get louder as they coasted into our range. The meaning of the experience was in the camaraderie, the beauty of the salt marsh, the quiet, peaceful feeling of being in a different world, and the pride I felt in being a duck hunter. Killing ducks was part of the experience. I didn't feel glee, but I did feel satisfaction. I also felt a certain honesty. Most people's meat comes neatly packaged and wrapped in cellophane; the unpleasant act of taking the animal's life has been performed by someone else, out of sight and out of mind. To hunt is to eliminate the middleman, and to rekindle an instinct that is basic to the human race.

This is not to overly romanticize hunting. Many hunters simply want an excuse to get out of the house for a few days and forsake domestic chores for the company of good friends and (sometimes) good whiskey. It's also true that many who hunt do so in ways that are irresponsible if not reprehensible. People shoot deer out of season, or illegally from cars as the deer freeze at night in the glare of headlights. Others leave dead game in the woods, or perversely take aim at domesticated animals such as cows or dogs, particularly if they've had bad luck that day. A few shoot far more than they could ever consume themselves, in the tradition of England's Edward VII, whose hunting expeditions were such orgies of senseless carnage that they left his party waist-deep in dead game.

The hunters I know well not only aren't like this, they are ashamed and angry about those who are. But even more important, these responsible hunters harbor a deep and understandable resentment towards those who believe these miscreants represent the entire group. I have no doubt that if a typical Maine hunter came down to a party in Georgetown and began discoursing on the joys of hunting, many of the guests would recoil in horror and think twice about the character of whoever invited him. That's because to millions of Americans, particularly those who are well-educated and self-proclaimed liberals, anyone who hunts is viewed as little more than a Bambi-killer, a primitive, perhaps dangerous, yokel who takes pleasure in the savage murder of innocent, sweet little furry creatures.

Such reactions should be seen for what they are: an example of prejudice that in some ways is reminiscent of racists who don't personally know any blacks but automatically consider them unintelligent and immoral. Rational arguments won't help a hunter among such people; in vain will he point out that the deer and ducks he shoots are anything but endangered species, that "thinning" animal herds is often necessary to prevent mass starvation, that hunting is really no different (and perhaps more honest) than letting the abattoir perform the butchering.

Not all gun-control advocates hold this prejudice, but far too many do. A major contributor to this prejudice is the media. It's well-known that those who report and shape the news are more politically liberal than the average voter; what's less well-known is that reporters predominately come from middle- and upper-class families in the cities and suburbs. They are largely ignorant of hunting and the motives behind it; chances are good their close circle of friends includes no one who engages in the sport. For many reporters, hunters are a safe target for a kind of class snobbism forbidden in most other areas of journalism.

This was graphically illustrated in 1975 with a CBS News special, "The Guns of Autumn." The 90-minute documentary narrated by Dan Rather was anything but subtle in its desire to suggest that those who indulge in this alleged "sport" are dangerous, blood-thirsty, tobacco-chewing cretins: one segment shows a deer being shot seven times at point-blank range amidst the hunter's heavy breathing; in another, a hunter lets his dogs tear a cornered bear to pieces "because they deserve a chew." Such scenes were interspersed with the carefully edited comments of hunters themselves ("I love to hunt everything," enthused one. "Everything that is."). So offensive was the show to those who know hunters—not to mention hunters themselves—that it probably did more to increase NRA's membership than a dozen mass mailings.

Guncontrollable Urges

What does this prejudice against hunters have to do with futile attempts at gun control? A lot more than people realize. Those who hunt hardly ever do so with handguns, while street criminals hardly ever use a rifle or a shotgun. Ask a typical hunter about laws to make handguns harder to obtain, and rather than spout NRA propaganda he'll probably shrug and wonder what it has to do with him. The answer is not much, and just as most hunters have learned to live with laws prohibiting ownership of mortars, machine guns, and hand grenades, they can learn to live without

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handguns. In fact, to the extent that hunters, like most Americans, are deeply troubled about crime, they should actually be sympathetic to gun-control efforts aimed at weapons for which they have almost no use. The conscientious hunter and the liberal lawyer who crusades for handgun controls could be natural allies.

Millions of Americans view anyone who hunts as a Bambi-killer, someone who takes pleasure in the savage murder of innocent, sweet little furry creatures.

The fact that they aren't allies isn't due to the NRA's faultless logic; as anyone familiar with the issue knows, the NRA's main arguments against gun control are flimsy. Misinterpreting the Second Amendment, which refers specifically to the ability of states to maintain militias, to mean that concealable handguns should be as easy to buy as television sets and transistor radios is a literal-minded reading of the Constitution carried to an absurd extreme. As for the argument that handgun ownership is necessary to preserve liberty against the machinations of a repressive government, if a police state ever threatens, a perfectly legal 30-06 would be a great deal more effective than a Saturday Night Special, which couldn't hit a pickup truck at 50 yards. As for people owning handguns to protect themselves against street crime, it's a well-established fact that a gun in the home is far more likely to end up being used against a family member or accidentally injuring or killing a child than thwarting a criminal act.

To explain their lack of headway, gun-control advocates usually point to the NRA's lobbying acumen. The group's lobbyists are slick and professional, and its sophisticated mass-mailing techniques are the envy of Washington lobbies. Between members' dues and contributions from gun manufacturers, the NRA is also quite well-endowed.

Yet only a small minority of gun owners belongs to the NRA, and most of the members I know belong largely because of the excellent magazine they receive for their $15 annual dues. Moreover, gun-control advocates have access to the same mass-marketing techniques, and in the recent California fight, most of the money coming from the state's large law firms and big corporations flowed into the coffers of initiative supporters, not the NRA.

I think the failure of past gun-control efforts is tied directly to the prejudices so many gun-control advocates hold against hunters. The NRA subtly but shrewdly exploits this prejudice so that people who might otherwise be sympathetic to handgun restrictions take refuge on the side of those who make them feel not morally inferior, but patriotic and responsible.

The NRA's skill in this regard is demonstrated in its latest promotional campaign, which many liberals instantly dismiss as obnoxious but which is one of the most effective advertising pitches to come down the pike in some time. The ads feature a number of NRA members—a kindly pediatrician, the benign governor of Oregon, a nine-year-old boy—using vague homilies to explain their love of hunting and the virtues of responsible gun ownership. "I'm the NRA" is the headline, and the ads serve to reassure gun owners, whether they belong to the NRA or not, that they are decent, respectable people who own guns, not because of paranoia or murderous instincts, but for wholesome motives.

The NRA ads contrast starkly with those used by Proposition 15 supporters in California. Their major television spot featured a narrator somberly reciting the argument for gun control as a roster of names—all recent victims of handguns—swept rapidly by on the screen. The spot was aimed largely at urban and suburban voters and was obviously directed at reinforcing the fear many people have of street crime.

It's not that the spot wasn't effective; in fact, those who saw it tell me those who were already inclined to vote for the measure might have been so moved as to immediately write out a check to the "Yes on 15" campaign. Yet for many of the Californians who weren't immediately sympathetic to the measure, there were some subtle and unfortunate messages in the pitch. Clearly implied in the spots was a threat—if one voted against the initiative, the killing would continue, and the nay-sayer would bear some of the responsibility. It was a powerful, double-edged message that could have shamed people or made them angry—and judging by the vote totals, it clearly did the latter.

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A Losing Proposition

What Proposition 15 supporters failed to do in California—and what their counterparts have failed to do elsewhere—is build a bridge between themselves and hunters. This could have been done in the California campaign by running TV spots that featured hunters who described their enthusiasm for the sport but endorsed Proposition 15 as well. They could have expressed their concern about crime and violence while pointing out that the regulation of handguns can be—and should be—a completely different matter than the regulation of rifles and shotguns. There's no assurance this softer approach would have succeeded; the passions involved in the gun-control debate are so visceral as to overwhelm much rational argument. But it's my guess that gun-control advocates at least could have come closer to victory.

But Proposition 15 supporters didn't try to go beyond the predictable arguments, and in the wake of the initiative's defeat, the predictable lessons are being drawn. The media have portrayed the loss as proof that the NRA and the "gun nuts" are stronger than ever. This characterization suits the NRA just fine; not only does the perception of strength help contribute to its reality, but every time someone mentions the term "gun nut" it means more names on their membership rolls.

I'm afraid that the two sides will not grow closer, but farther apart, while the arguments of both get even more emotional and less convincing. And that will leave most rural Americans, hunters and non-hunters alike, with no real voice in this matter. There will be the NRA, trying to equate any attempt at gun control with an attempt to subvert liberty, patriotism, and the American Way. There will be the press, too often taking a Walt Disney view of animals as the emotional basis for its coverage of hunting. And there will be the gun-control advocates themselves, more inclined to assert their superiority as sole arbiters of Proper Values and Decency than to understand hunters or treat them as equals.

And that's everyone's loss. Something must be done to curb the proliferation of weapons and senseless violence in American society, and hunters and rural people could play an important role. But as long as they feel left out of this debate and as long as both the press and the NRA fail to accept their moral and professional responsibility, the stalemate will continue. An important part of our common cultural heritage will stay ignored or misunderstood, and the pointless deaths from handguns will continue. ■

THE WASHINGTON MONTHLY

Journalism Award

for January 1983 is awarded to

Michael Gordon,
National Journal

Two months before Pentagon analyst Chuck Spinney made headlines by telling Congress Reagan's military buildup will probably cost much more than projected, Gordon thoroughly examined the internal Pentagon debate about Spinney's work and the serious questions it raises.

Julie Kosterlitz,
Common Cause

Using the Freedom of Information Act with skill and persistence, Kosterlitz details new and disturbing evidence about the integrity of Thomas Reed, a top aide to National Security Adviser William Clark. Reed was charged last year by the SEC with illegally using insider information to make $427,000 on the stock market.

Bill Broad,
Science '83

An electromagnetic pulse from one nuclear blast 250 miles above the U.S. could wipe out our communications system and render much of our nuclear arsenal useless. Broad does more than describe this little-known phenomenon; more important, he reveals the self-interest Pentagon officials have in keeping its existence under wraps.

The **Monthly Journalism Award** is presented each month to the best newspaper or magazine article (or series of articles) on our political system. Nominations from any newspaper or magazine in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation.

The award for articles published in March will be announced in the June issue. Nominations will close April 15. Nominations should be accompanied by two copies of the article or articles.

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UNSAFE

When you board a commercial plane flight, you have the comfort of knowing that the chances of dying in an accident are extremely small—one in two million, to be precise. Far more life-threatening is the drive to the airport. But suppose your plane does have an accident. What would your chances be then? A lot smaller than you'd think.

As those who investigate airplane crashes will tell you, after even the most minor of accidents the interior of an airplane looks as if it's been ransacked. During a crash row after row of seats often collapse, catapulting their occupants against walls, seats, and other passengers. Overhead luggage bins pop open, their contents tumbling down on passengers and clogging the aisles. Entire galleys can shift and block exit doors. Floors buckle and twist. Lights can go out and the upholstery sometimes catches fire.

Last year the National Transportation Safety Board released a study of the 88 major commercial airline crashes that occurred in the United States between 1970 and 1981, and its conclusions should dispel the widely held belief that plane crashes are invariably fatal. On the contrary, the NTSB concluded that 77 were at least "partially survivable"; that is, the forces exerted on the human body were less than those it can withstand with just a lap seatbelt in place. Yet by the NTSB's estimate, those accidents needlessly killed 634 people and seriously injured 548. "Occupants of large transport aircraft are not protected adequately in a minor crash landing," the NTSB concluded. "They are being trapped and killed in survivable accidents. Many deaths and injuries are directly attributable to failures of seats and cabin furnishings."

The crash in September 1982 of a chartered DC-10 in Malaga, Spain, is a perfect example. Forced to abort its takeoff, the plane ran off the end of the runway, knocked over a wooden fence, and came to rest in a field. The "crash" was so minor many passengers didn't realize an accident had occurred. Yet while 343 people survived, three stewardesses and 47 passengers in the rear of the plane died, asphyxiated by a fire that broke out outside the rear exit several minutes after the crash. The victims' path to the forward exits was blocked by damaged seats, decorative ceiling panels, and the contents of overhead compartments that had popped open on impact. While a few passengers in the rear managed to grope their way out over the debris, the rest waited for help that came too late.

In another crash, that of a United Airlines flight from Washington, D.C., to Chicago in 1972, no more than 16 of the 61 passengers on board were killed by the impact. But the final death toll was 43, most of them injured passengers unable to escape the subsequent fire. "The number of fire-related deaths. . . probably could have been reduced significantly had seat systems and other furnishings been designed and tested to upgraded standards," the NTSB later ruled.

The nation's airline industry is deservedly proud of its overall safety record, and planes are getting safer every year as sophisticated equip-

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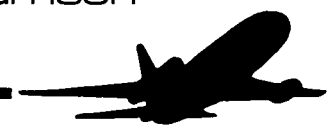
AT ANY ALTITUDE

by Howard S. Abramson



ment is developed that can anticipate and correct problems long before humans in the cockpit even know a potential disaster is brewing. And compared with the NTSB's estimate of 10,000 unnecessary deaths *a year* in cars that lack passive restraint systems, 634 deaths in a decade hardly seems alarming.

Yet by the airline industry's own standards, those needless 634 deaths are shockingly high, comparing with a grand total of 2,300 fatalities during the same period in all domestic and overseas accidents that involved American planes. At least one death in four could have been prevented, the NTSB found—in many cases by doing no more than making planes as crashworthy as automobiles.

For example, humans restrained only by lap belts can withstand up to 25 gs of forward impact (one "g" equals the natural pull of gravity on an object), and from 10 to 20 gs of impact in other directions. Add a shoulder harness and human tolerance exceeds 45 gs. These tolerances are used to help determine reasonable standards for vehicles; the government requires every automobile sold in America, for example, to have a seat-restraint system that protects occupants from 20 gs of forward force.

Not so with airplanes. Their restraint systems have to withstand only 9 gs of forward force and 1.5 gs of sideward force. But the relatively low standards are often meaningless; in crashes of far less force, the seatbelts work just fine while the seats themselves can tear away from the floor. In the Malaga crash, for example, one investigator on the scene estimated that the impact didn't exceed 4 gs.

Flimsy seats are not the only problem. The latches on overhead compartments are notoriously weak, popping open sometimes during a hard landing. During a crash, the heavy objects often stored in them can become lethal missiles. The galley equipment is also poorly anchored. When it caroms about the cabin, those most likely to be injured are the stewards and stewardesses who are supposed to provide assistance for any hurt passengers. (Airplanes carry no medical supplies beyond the standard first-aid kit familiar to Boy Scouts—but that's another story.)

The NTSB can only investigate airline crashes and make suggestions; the agency that dictates safety standards is the Federal Aviation Administration. And the major reason aircraft interiors crumple like tin cans is that there hasn't been a major upgrading of interior safety standards since 1946. At the time, the commercial aviation industry was just entering the era of four-engine, propeller-driven planes that could carry up to 75 passengers at over 200 miles per hour. The day the safety regulations were published in the *Federal Register*, an adjoining page outlined regulations on the strength requirements for the cloth that then covered airplane wings. The only major change in the FAA's restraint regulations came in 1953, when the forward-impact requirements increased from 6 gs to the current 9 gs.

The first serious effort to improve cabin safety came in 1962, when a particularly serious plane crash prompted the NTSB's predecessor to write

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Studying the 88 major commercial airline crashes from 1970-81, the National Transportation Safety Board found 77 "partially survivable." But the Board also concluded 634 unnecessary deaths occurred, all "directly attributable to failures of seats and cabin furnishings."

to the FAA: "We are convinced from this accident and others in recent years that an increase in the minimum level [of crashworthiness] is long overdue. Accordingly, it is recommended that the studies... now underway in your agency be expedited toward the end of achieving improved safety in this area at the earliest date." The FAA quickly responded. "We concur with the views contained in [your] recommendation relative to the adequacy of seat tie-down," it declared. "We wish to assure you that the need for necessary studies... is clearly recognized and that these studies are being expedited..."

To expedite a study is one thing; to expedite doing something about its results is another matter entirely. During the 1960s, the FAA performed a series of safety tests, including the deliberate crashing of an airplane. But when the results came in, the agency discarded most of them. After the crash test revealed the inadequacy of existing standards, for example, the FAA decided that the plane it had gone to such great expense and trouble to crash was too old for the results to be applicable. What the FAA threw away, however, the U.S. Army picked up, adopting many of the recommendations that resulted from the tests.

Sporadic efforts to upgrade cabin standards continued through the 1970s, but there was little enthusiasm for them and even less success. The airlines, insulated from the free market by government regulation yet competing fiercely for more passengers, hardly wanted FAA to tell potential customers that planes weren't as safe as they ought to be. Plane manufacturers like Boeing and McDonnell Douglas, engaged in spirited competition to sell their products, also wanted nothing to do with something that would increase their costs.

The key player in this conspiracy of inaction has been the FAA itself. Through the years, FAA officials have given a variety of explanations for failing to raise standards: manufacturers were "voluntarily improving their products"; more testing was required; stiffer regulations should not be piecemeal but part of a thorough upgrading of all standards. Behind these explanations is an attitude shared by many in the business—planes are meant to fly, not to crash.

Typical of the FAA's performance has been its approach to stiffer seat standards. In 1977 the Aviation Consumer Action Project, founded by Ralph Nader, petitioned the FAA to upgrade those standards. The FAA refused to respond to the petition for two years. ACAP filed a suit in 1979 alleging unreasonable delay; the FAA responded with all due haste, rejecting the petition. In 1980 ACAP convinced Congress to hold a hearing on the subject, which in turn prompted the FAA to hold its own. When the major participants in the controversy—the seat manufacturers—decided they didn't want to participate, the FAA held the hearing anyway.

FAA Administrator J. Lynn Helms (whose approach to government regulation was demonstrated by a private meeting he once called with airline company presidents to solicit their advice on getting the FAA out of their hair) finally issued a ruling in early 1981: more tests were needed. Those tests will be completed in 1984; only then will the FAA decide whether any new rules are justified.

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The most recent NTSB report was the latest in an attempt to focus public attention on air cabin safety and prod the FAA into action. In addition to calling for a complete overhaul of the 1946 standards, it recommended that the FAA immediately take some relatively inexpensive steps to protect passengers. Those recommendations include stronger seat welds, improved methods of connecting seats to the fuselage, eventual changes in seat design, and more secure anchoring of interior cabin parts. "We were talking about state-of-the-art stuff," says James King, former chairman of the NTSB and for years the loudest proponent in Washington for more stringent standards.

And the FAA's reaction? "We don't believe anything in [the report] was new to us," says Thomas E. McSweeny, who until his promotion several months ago was chief of the FAA's Certification Procedures and Standards Branch. As for the immediate improvements, McSweeny claims that if they had been in place over the last decade,

Confessions of an FAA Felon

I never thought that researching a story on air cabin safety would lead me to commit a criminal act, but today I stand accused of violating Section 121.589 (c) of the Federal Aviation Regulations. My crime? Putting my young son in his automobile safety seat during a flight last September between San Francisco and Burbank, California.

Unsafe as cabin arrangements on modern jetliners are for adult passengers, the dangers children face are even greater. Conventional seatbelts often fail during a crash because small children slip out of them. As for children under two, the FAA expects them to be carried in a parent's arms. Since it is virtually impossible to hold onto a child in the event of even a minor collision, I decided to take along the car seat when I flew to California to continue research on my story.

On my initial flight from Washington to San Francisco, the TWA stewardesses tried to get me to remove my son from the car seat. I insisted on knowing whether I was breaking an FAA regulation or an airline rule; they summoned the chief flight attendant. She agreed to let my son stay in his seat, but later produced the company's flight manual, which states that car seats are not allowed.

On my Pacific Southwest Airlines flight to Burbank, things got nastier. The steward, who didn't realize my son was in the car seat until close to takeoff, had the authority to ask the pilot to abort the flight. He decided not to—but did file a case incident report with the FAA.

As it turns out, there really is an FAA rule that expressly prohibits the use of infant safety seats on commercial airlines—even if a separate airline seat is purchased. This spring, six months after the incident, the FAA informed me that it will settle for no less than a $1,000 fine—the maximum provided by statute.

The reason for the rule, the FAA says, is that it doesn't know whether car seats will work in a crash. But it's never tested any seats (that's the manufacturers' responsibility, it says), and it refuses to accept crash test results performed by other agencies. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, for example, has tested and approved dozens of car-seat models, weighing them against automobile safety standards that are *far more stringent* than those that apply to planes. A spokesman for NHTSA says that the agency's position is that "seats meeting our tougher regulations should be permitted on planes, since the present situation exposes infants to the worst possible risk in the event of rapid plane deceleration. . . ." The National Traffic Safety Board took the same position in February.

The FAA still insists on specialized tests, but last November it did loosen up a bit, issuing provisional approval for one car seat that had been specially tested by its manufacturer, the Cosco/Peterson Model 78. According to *The New York Times*, the FAA's decision was largely the result of a crusade conducted by a man whose two-year-old son was injured in a minor plane crash 14 years ago.

Coincidentally, the seat I was using also happened to be a Cosco/Peterson Model 78. Just my luck that the FAA decided not to make its approval retroactive.

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"there might have been more deaths." McSweeny's reasoning is that seat-restraint systems capable of withstanding 20 gs of forward force will be more rigid, transmitting more shock directly to the passengers seated in them. Just about everyone else vehemently disagrees with McSweeny's conclusion, from King—"He doesn't know what he's talking about"—to Stan Desjardins, head of an Arizona-based consulting firm that the FAA itself has hired to test seat safety in preparation for the agency's plan to crash another old jet, in the Mojave desert in 1984. (This plane, incidentally, is eight years older than the one whose test results the FAA previously discarded.) Desjardins observes, "While simply increasing the rigidity of the restraint system might hurt more people, we're not talking about just making [seats] 'stronger' but making them better."

Crash Course In Safety

What explains the FAA's failure to upgrade air cabin standards? King, now a vice president at Harvard, says that in his five years at the NTSB he was never able to pinpoint just who in the FAA was vetoing stricter standards. "Administrators come and go," King said, "but a few senior career people [at the FAA] apparently decided it's just not going to happen."

The bureaucracy's antipathy to stricter standards seems to have several explanations. Many FAA employees once served in the military. The U.S. Army's stricter standards notwithstanding, speak to them about safety and it's soon clear that "real men" don't fret about flimsy seat supports. Comments like, "C'mon, if your number's up, you gotta go, stronger seat belts or not," are not unusual.

Many FAA officials also take advantage of the federal government's general retirement system to leave early for the private sector, qualifying for an extra pension in the process. It's only logical that most continue to ply their trade in the airline industry they once regulated. This practice extends to career bureaucrats and political appointees alike. Former administrator Najeeb Halaby left the FAA to become chief of Pan American, for example.

The revolving door works both ways. J. Lynn Helms came to the agency from Piper, a manufacturer of small planes. (Safety standards for private aircraft, incidentally, are far more lax, in large part because companies like Piper have argued that the customer shouldn't be forced to pay for safety he doesn't want. This argument should be familiar to those who follow the automobile-safety debate.) Helms's deputy administrator, Mike Fennello, came from Eastern Airlines; the agency's chief counsel, J.E. Murdock, formerly worked for United Airlines.

That the FAA often acts as if the airlines were its clients should not be surprising. The agency's preferred method of regulation is to persuade airlines and manufacturers to "voluntarily" improve their planes. The FAA also relies heavily on them for information; several years ago, for example, it hired McDonnell Douglas as a consultant to study interior cabin safety.

The airline industry has made its opposition to stricter standards clear. For them, the main objection is cost, particularly now that airline deregulation has left them scrambling for passengers and looking for every possible way to cut corners.

Of course, not all safety improvements cost the same; some are much more expensive than others. But the NTSB's recommendations clearly recognized that—hence the relatively simple "interim" recommendations for existing aircraft. Reinforcing seat welds when an airplane is in for its periodic maintenance is quite reasonable; replacing the entire floor of that airplane clearly isn't. The latter kind of changes should be designed into new aircraft, just as only new cars were required to have seat belts and stronger bumpers.

But the FAA refuses to take this "one step at a time" approach. The agency has said for years that changes should not be made piecemeal, but as part of a comprehensive safety program. But such a program would be quite costly to the airlines. It would require extensive testing. It should not be rushed. On the surface, it all seems so logical. But as Cornish Hitchock, ACAP's legal director observes, "It's indisputable that you should look at everything—the strength of the floor, the seats, the walls—but you don't stop the whole parade until you're all done."

But that's exactly what has happened. FAA foot-dragging has already ensured that the next generation of commercial aircraft—including 757s and 767s—will be subject only to the 1946 standards. And given the FAA's record, it's only natural that some might despair of change ever coming at all. As the NTSB wryly observed last year of the FAA's plan to improve cabin safety, "It is unlikely that major improvements in aircraft crashworthiness based on the current program will be seen much before the year 2000." ■

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REGISTRATION DRIVE

by Franklin Lavin

The pictures are among the most ridiculous you'll ever see on television or in the papers. There's this 18-year-old whose criminal record consists of nothing more than teasing his sister or staying at the drive-in after curfew, and he's being hauled off to *jail* for refusing to register for the draft.

Instead of indicting, trying, and convicting the 600,000 non-registrants as if they were chain-saw murderers, why not try a more benign, cheaper, and much more effective form of enforcement?

I have an idea for one, which I call "Registration Drive." Rather than hustling young men off to jail and liberal martyrdom, the federal government should require all states simply to issue driver's licenses that expire on the holder's 18th birthday, and prohibit the states from renewing the license of anyone who refuses to register for the draft.

I hardly need to spell out the implications of the loss of a driver's license to the average teenage American male, rich or poor, black or white. Only a very few would subject themselves to the resulting social humiliation and lack of mobility. Anyone willing to suffer such consequences could almost be eligible for conscientious-objector status on this basis alone. The punishment would be as unpopular as driving is popular, which is exactly the right degree of severity for a crime of this kind.

Of course the main reason for the plan is not to punish but to convince young men that they should register. The current approach doesn't do that. Out of the hundreds of thousands who refuse to register, only a handful will ever face the courts. The non-registrants simply can play the odds: 43,000 to one against an indictment, 100,000 to one against a conviction. Because none of these offenders will ever be able to repeat their crimes, jailing or fining them makes very little sense. "Protecting society," "repaying society," "rehabilitating the guilty," and all of the other justifications for normal punishment just aren't relevant in this situation—nor in many others.

The government's plan to deny financial aid to students failing to register suffers several defects. Not all draft-age men attend college; rich students who don't need aid can escape. A Minnesota judge also ruled recently that the plan violates the constitution's self-incrimination clause. That may be a concern with a jail sentence looming; if the punishment is denying a privilege (a driver's license), this standard seems ludicrous.

Some might object that the Registration Drive would be ineffective for those who don't drive, whether they're rich teenagers from Manhattan or very poor ones who just can't afford a car. However, with the exception of those totally estranged from society, young men do drink in bars or cash checks, and they need a driver's license for identification. Besides, getting a license is an important part of the rites of male passage. Whether they own a car or not, 99.9 percent of the male teenage population *wants* a license.

The driver's license renewal could be a model of creative punishment for a victimless crime. The beauty of this type of penalty is that enforcement would be swift, almost without cost (states would have only to change expiration dates on some licenses), and painless to the social fabric. Not even the Berrigan brothers could get excited over this one. What would they shout—"Let my people drive"? ■

Franklin Lavin is assistant director of the President's Commission on Executive Exchange.

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HANNAH·ARENDT

Photos: Hannah Arendt in 1933 (courtesy of the Hannah Arendt Estate) Hannah Arendt, 1975 (courtesy of Rhoda Nathans)

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AMERICA'S ERRANT PHILOSOPHER

BY TAYLOR BRANCH

Hannah Arendt died nearly eight years ago, leaving no clear successor in the long line of abstract thinkers who acted forcefully in American public life throughout the 20th century. She fled from Hitler's Germany to New York in an era when, despite the grimness of war and the Depression, Americans remained optimistic about the powers of wisdom and so respectful of its leading advocates that philosopher John Dewey and theologian Reinhold Niebuhr were quoted frequently on the front pages of newspapers. When Arnold Toynbee toured the country lecturing on the meaning of history, it was before packed houses. And when Hannah Arendt published *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, a complex analysis of the way anti-Semitism, racism, and imperialism began as respectable movements in Europe and finally merged into Nazism, critics rightly called the book "relentlessly abstract"—but it was read and praised by academics and general readers alike.

Arendt's career flourished during the 1950s, when some middle-class Americans began to spend less time keeping up with new ideas in politics or philosophy and more time learning to

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act like intellectuals. The memory is jarring now, but in those days you could ask a stranger to identify himself and receive the reply, even outside New York, that he was an intellectual. Adlai Stevenson was his candidate, of course. Many essentially non-political people entered election debates to demonstrate their superior intelligence by speaking up for Adlai, and eager authors wrote articles about what "the intellectual" should think of Sputnik and how "the intellectual" should vote in 1960. Henry Kissinger's 1961 article, "The Policy-Maker and the Intellectual," excited greater interest than all his previous work on nuclear warfare. Back then there was nothing novel about Kissinger's reference to "the intellectual" as a discrete category of proudly self-conscious people. What was new was the term "policy-maker." Kissinger hoped to make Washington more palatable to intellectuals by transforming the grimy politician into the vaguely erudite "policy-maker." One suspects that he also hoped to earn the gratitude of politicians by elevating their trade name.

The intellectual class has long since gone out of vogue, and is probably considered quaint even by readers of *The New York Review of Books*. Its life was mercifully short by the standards of trends in high culture. I don't miss the self-congratulation or the obscure quarrels, but I do miss Hannah Arendt. And, to make matters worse, I fear that many of us will overlook Arendt or lose hope for future thinkers like her precisely because we lump her together with the worst traits of the society intellectuals to whom we bid good riddance.

I must confess at the outset my emotional tie to Hannah Arendt's reputation. I remember her distinctly as the first person whose mind ever left me in awe. Many teachers before and since have taught me more; many times I have felt slow-witted as I tried to catch up with a writer or lecturer. But I have never experienced again the mixture of brain stretch and pleasure that Hannah Arendt caused as a guest professor at a couple of evening seminars I attended in 1969. Old, dark-eyed, and sagging, she was one of the few people on earth for whom it could have been a compliment to say she resembled Eleanor Roosevelt. She was childless and wrote philosophical treatises utterly devoid of humor, but the corners of a grandmother's mouth frequently hinted at a smile as she talked. Her children and her amusement were the ideas that must have been familiar to her after all those years, but which seemed to roll out in fresh arrangements. Although she preferred to answer questions, the graduate students in our group stopped asking them once we discovered that in the absence of a question she would explore some new angle on her last point. Whether discussing the Supreme Court or the distinction between labor and work, she wound her way backward and forward across centuries of historical anecdotes about political battles or a particular philosopher's conception of a word, stopping often in Greece and Rome. To her, politics and philosophy were inseparable.

All this does not mean that Hannah Arendt was the ideal intellectual. She was given to a certain amount of snobbish posturing. In her formative years, European intellectuals were required to smoke cigarettes, and, even into the 1970s, Arendt seldom appeared in a photograph without a lighted one. (Her second husband, the usual ex-communist, high-school dropout, philosophy prodigy, always posed with a lighted pipe.) In lectures and in print, she occasionally dropped long, untranslated French phrases, which was considered acceptable, but she dropped Latin and Greek ones as well. Her best friend, we are told, was Mary McCarthy, a regal proponent of in-group behavior among New York intellectuals. Arendt made no field trips, nor did she ever prowl the corridors of government departments. She was not Woodward and Aristotle. She did not believe that intellectuals were obligated to serve politics or to evaluate their work according to its practical results.

These foibles and distinctions are relatively unimportant, however. Arendt unreservedly loved the world of thought for its own sake and not for any status it might confer, as anyone who watched her could tell. (I could even forgive her the Greek phrases, assuming they were on point.) And she never sought to seal herself in protective abstraction, as many in her profession have done. Instead, Arendt chose constantly to apply her knowledge to current events in politics and to address herself not just to academics but to all citizens who would bother to think with her. For this, many philosophers dismissed her with condescension as a journalist. Yet it is precisely this mixture of thought and political reality that made her so remarkable.

Appropriately, Arendt called her last book *The Life of the Mind*, and her biographer aptly entitled the story of her life *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (Yale University, $25).

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Semi-Semitism

Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's excellent study rises above the usual caliber of books by former students about their teachers. She writes with balanced good sense, seeking neither to enshrine nor to conquer Arendt, and she avoids the temptation to show off by pursuing every subtle twist in Arendt's thinking.

The Arendt family, during the anti-Semitism that swept Europe after the Dreyfus Affair in France, held steadfastly to their identity as Germans. They shared the romantic, intellectual nationalism that grew up in the 19th century of Beethoven, Brahms, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, Wagner, and, above all, Goethe. It was a time when Germans boasted that their language was the most beautiful in the world, their music most enchanting, their philosophy most powerful. Although both Arendt parents were unlettered, they passed this pride along to their daughter, who diligently pursued education and high culture. The word "Jew" was never spoken in the Arendt home even though the Arendts were East Prussian Jews. Young Hannah somehow absorbed the unspoken family commandments: she was never to deny being Jewish if attacked for it at school and should come home immediately to tell her mother; on the other hand, she was not to inquire about what it meant to be Jewish, even in the privacy of her own home. Hannah Arendt, in short, grew up in an atmosphere of self-denial as a Jew and of self-celebration as a German—a paradoxical background for a Jewish philosopher who would become best known for her writing on the evils of the Nazi regime.

Arendt's most controversial venture into Nazi history ocurred in the early 1960s, when she published *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil.* From the site of the famous war-crimes trial, she reported that Eichmann was not the snarling monster that everyone had long since come to accept as the portrait of any Nazi who helped administer the Final Solution. Instead, Arendt wrote that the man in the glass booth was mild-mannered and rational, with clean fingernails, a clear sense of duty, and no discernible instabilities. This was shocking enough, but she also reported extensively on the trial testimony showing that Eichmann's Jewish victims not only failed to resist but cooperated in their own execution. She attacked the Jewish councils that so efficiently listed their people, collected their possessions, and organized them at the train stations on time—cooperating with the Nazis in the hope of saving many by delivering a few and actually delivering many and saving a precious few favored ones. She was saying that there is no such thing as perfect innocence or evil, even in the Holocaust. The victims too must make choices, and in the modern world evil rarely comes like Sheriff Bull Connor, packaged for television.

Young-Bruehl reports that some of Arendt's oldest friends broke off contact and died before speaking to her again. The Israeli prosecutor in the

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Arendt constantly applied her knowledge to current events and politics. For this, fellow philosophers dismissed her with condescension as a journalist.

Eichmann case flew to the United States for a publicity tour expressly to repudiate Arendt's ideas. Books were written about the book, and reviews of its reviews. Some observers claim that it helped push Israel toward a new warrior stance after the 1967 war. Young-Bruehl follows the influence of Arendt's ideas into the origins of the New Left, citing the "radical" notion that nice, middle-class people could be nearly as evil as Eichmann. The biographer quotes a speech delivered by an Arendt reader in 1965 at the first Washington march against the war in Vietnam: "Think of all the men who now engineer that war. . . . They are not moral monsters. They are all honorable men. They are all liberals."

Rhodes to Hitler

The passions that *Eichmann* aroused in the Jewish community were mirrored in the complexities and seeming contradictions of Arendt's own life. In her early years, she did her best to keep her Jewish heritage removed from her doctoral dissertation on Saint Augustine, the father of systematic Catholic orthodoxy. Gradually, Hitler's persecution forced her into Jewish politics. She began tentatively, helping to gather publicity material about persecuted Jews, and for this activity she and her mother were questioned by police in 1933, the year Hitler took power. They left Germany for France, where the government confined Arendt in an internment camp in 1940 along with other Jews and "foreign elements." Ironically, the Nazi victory over the French army probably saved Arendt; she escaped in the chaos before the establishment of the Vichy regime. Even at that late date, some of her Jewish intellectual friends considered her paranoid; they remained in Europe to be killed.

During World War II, philosopher Arendt began her entry into politics on the snarled issues of Zionism and opposition to Hitler. Should Jews organize their own army or should they insist on being integrated into Allied armies? Should Jews resist British efforts to keep them out of Palestine or should they subordinate those grievances to the British effort against Hitler? Calling for a public meeting of Jews in New York, Arendt issued a rather quaint manifesto summoning "those who are convinced of the bankruptcy of past ideologies and are ready to tear out their hair in order to develop a new theoretical basis for Jewish politics. . . ." Arendt may have torn out her hair like a novice, but she never hesitated to take positions that puzzled or infuriated her intellectual friends. As a philosopher, Arendt knew how to split hairs, and she was never quite satisfied with anyone's attitude toward Israel. She was semi-Zionist yet a semi-opponent of Israel itself, and of course some people considered her a semi-Jew from the beginning. She believed firmly that Jews should engage in politics as Jews, referring scornfully to the naivete of those who still wanted to eschew politics in favor of assimilation. At the same time, she argued against the structure of Israel on the ground that the nation-state was obsolete and that an ethnically based Jewish state in a sea of Arab nations would mean perpetual grief. She seemed to support some sort of vague, constitutional federation of different peoples, based on the short-lived "councils" that had popped up in the Paris Commune and in the abortive Russian Revolution of 1905. For this, she was derided as naive.

In 1952 Arendt visited her old mentor and lover, philosopher Martin Heidegger, who was still living in Germany with his violently anti-Semitic wife. Heidegger had never bothered to

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repudiate the Nazis. To Arendt, after the Holocaust, this must have been a searing insult, yet she did not denounce Heidegger or even recall to him the names of their mutual intellectual friends who had been murdered because they were Jews. Instead, Arendt spoke to the philosopher with admiration and cherished the new poems he wrote for her. Young-Bruehl, the biographer, makes only a half-hearted effort to understand Arendt's weakness for Heidegger. It almost begs for Arendt to explain herself. How is it that two philosophers move to different ends of the Holocaust and then recover their old admiration for each other, never speaking of it at all?

Arendt, being an intellectual, would not or could not pose the question personally, but she felt the edge of it so keenly that she spent five years trying to explain the Nazis in her book, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, which first established her reputation outside the shrinking world of philosophers. The present biography makes clear the terrible urgency that drove Arendt deeper into the frightful questions—how to explain the Nazis as human beings, and why it was the Jews who became the Nazis' obsession—but Arendt sought answers in the time-honored manner of the Greeks and theologians, by spreading thought on the wound like a salve. She seems to have combed through essays, letters, newsclips, and desktop scribbles across centuries in a half-dozen languages to produce a manuscript that is vintage Arendt: meandering while never quite losing direction, dense but always clear. A reader who expects to learn about Hitler might be surprised to warm up with Clemenceau or Disraeli (whom Arendt calls a charlatan half-a-dozen times) or to jump from a lively account of the Dreyfus Affair into a discussion of Karl Marx's anti-Semitism, but it all adds something. Arendt discovers paradoxes by the dozen, and, like a good intellectual, enjoys standing an idea on its head.

The book shows that Arendt's willingness to enter controversy had grown since her early fights over Zionism. She annoyed many Jewish leaders by showing how the 18th-century "court" Jews were more secure as international outsiders, owing allegiance to no nation, than they were when they began to attain political and civil rights as German or French citizens. She angered readers in the allied nations by tracing aspects of the Nazi movement back to classical imperialism and "race-thinking" as they developed across the turn of the century (in what I think are the two best sections of the book). Commentators in the victorious nations were comfortable with the idea that a German like Nietzsche might have planted a diseased seed in Hitler's brain, but they were not happy to hear Arendt say the same about a French writer like Celine, or Cecil ("I would annex the planets if I could") Rhodes, or a liberal like Gladstone.

Arendt also upset many of her fellow New York leftist intellectuals by likening the totalitarian bureaucracy of the Nazis to the continuing regime in the Soviet Union. At a time when Stalin was still alive, and when Rahv of the *Partisan Review* had earned a lifetime of recrimination by "deserting" Stalin, Arendt detailed the structural similarities between Nazi and Soviet totalitarian bureaucracy, and predicted that the latter would outlive Stalin. The prediction, whose accuracy was by no means obvious at the time, led to charges than Arendt was an orthodox Cold Warrior. But Arendt was never orthodox, and she wrote about Karl Marx like an old friend, reprimanding him frequently for sentimentality and other errors in politics. She always believed that the ignorant misunderstanding of Marx by American politicians and the primitive worship of him by intellectuals were both indicators of tragically childish political thought, which in turn kept the ideas of the American Revolution "sterile in the world."

Arendt saw the concentration camp as the telltale institution of totalitarianism. In its day-to-day routine, its inversion of the conscience by which sincere administrators would feel guilty if they did *not* do their part in the delivery of murder, she found a new, "radical evil" that could not be explained using traditional ideas of human nature. She did not take her own explanation much farther than this identification, but the key notion was that "radical evil" was bound up with bureaucracy and the growth of the middle class. She pursued this idea into great public uproar when she covered the Eichmann trial.

Hannah's Complaint

In 1958, between her two books about the Nazis, Arendt wrote *The Human Condition*. I remember expecting that volume to be too metaphysical for my taste, but it remains the Arendt book I cherish most. To me, it is philosophy at its

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Arendt described Hitler's Jewish victims as neat, well educated, and meek–stereotypical bureaucrats being gassed by other stereotypical bureaucrats.

best, generating wisdom with ideas that are pleasurable and also powerful enough to illuminate an enormous variety of specific interests. Young-Bruehl tells us in the biography that Arendt had wanted to call it *Love of the World*, but apparently was thwarted by publishers who thought this too lowbrow for a philosopher. She wrote it to address what she believed had been a central problem of mankind for nearly 2,500 years: all philosophers from Plato through the 19th century thought of politics as something that needed to be controlled lest it disturb the higher pursuits of the philosophers. Politics, like farming and household chores, was an activity to be endured only as necessary to free people for contemplation. Arendt wrote that even Karl Marx, who first defined man as a laboring animal and not as a reasoning being or child of God, was motivated by his desire to liberate all people from their laboring condition. Marx envisioned a time, after the revolution provided for all the necessities and wiped out the burdensome realm of the state, when a person would be free to be a dancer one day, a craftsman the next, and a poet the third. Only then, presumably, would Marx's conscience allow him to sit down again with Plato.

Arendt considered the vision contradictory in that Marx wanted to liberate mankind from its own purported essence. More important to her was the vision's hostility to politics, which helped bring about the sad irony of Soviet bureaucrats dispensing Marxist theology to the masses below. For all Marx's faults, however, Arendt believed that he and the "freedom thinkers" in the West were united in a historical development larger than their disagreements: they were reversing the ancient hierarchy of thought above action. Whereas people once worked in order to think, now they were thinking in order to work—to make money or to perfect the revolution. The active life had displaced the life of thought, and contemplation was lost altogether.

The active life rolled over the communist and noncommunist intellectuals alike. Many of them, sensing that they would make fools of themselves in politics, retreated into linguistics and the semi-mathematical studies of analytic philosophy, where no one could ever accuse them of trying to take part in the active life. This movement was sweeping American philosophy in Arendt's time and is today an established orthodoxy. One reason we hear so little on the great issues from contemporary philosophers is that they are engrossed in questions like how the indefinite articles operate in the various human languages. The very few who dare to address philosophical questions of importance to the world do so in a manner that mocks both philosophy and science. Robert Nozick and John Rawls, for example, recently published books teeming with set theories, equations in symbolic logic, and pseudo-scientific formulas from "economic utility theory"—each seeking to "prove" a cluster of ideas about political philosophy. But the dominant American philosophers privately laughed at Nozick and Rawls for going beyond the boundaries of the equations in the first place, into substantive areas where they might be contradicted. And to most everyone else, the long processions of Greek letters and numbers obscured the fact that the ideas behind all the grillwork were lifeless versions of standard conservative and liberal beliefs, respectively.

Arendt tried to buck the trend. She wanted to earn a place in public affairs for the life of the mind. She believed that politics is necessarily speech and action, both of which are meaningless without thought. To her, it was a trap to hope to conquer politics with the mind—yet vitally important to keep a place for it.

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt tries to describe the emergence of the active life in the modern era along many dimensions. Of time, for example, she asserts that a fundamental change in our conception began to spread from Europe

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shortly after the Reformation. People who had always thought of time as an endless string of circles—orbits, seasons, generations—began to think of it more as a straight line, on an upward incline measuring progress. "This is mortality:" she writes, "to move along a rectilinear line in a universe where everything, if it moves at all, moves in a cyclical order." The new emphasis of linear over circular time causes a tension in modern public life so central that it is often overlooked. Some recent polls have shown that a significant percentage of Americans believe that the economic indicators never will climb upward again and that therefore there will be, literally, no future. Such people are dangerous. Many of them are physically healthy, with good jobs and nice homes, but they are so wedded to linear time that they see life as only that shaded region of extra prosperity that time is supposed to bring them. In Arendt's terms, they confuse their anxieties about time for their material condition. The active life has not freed them but has swallowed them up; the mind restores no balance.

Triumph of the Bureaucrats

Arendt seldom changed her mind in her old age, but her popularity fluctuated with changes in the attitudes of her readers. Many New Leftists considered her their den mother until they became disquieted by her lectures on the many ways people confuse violence with power. Young-Bruehl tells of a New York meeting in 1967 of "radical intellectuals"—Noam Chomsky, Robert Lowell, Susan Sontag, chaired by Robert Silvers, editor of *The New York Review of Books*—where the topic was the legitimacy of violence in political causes. It was a time when radicals were eager to join the Black Panthers or blow up ROTC buildings, but Arendt went into her usual discourse about how such activities had little to do with the power to end the war. Tom Hayden jumped up to denounce her as too abstract, saying that he could not be impatient with poor people who felt they had no alternative to violence. Sontag supported him. By then, Arendt had become an Aunt Tom to many of the antiwar radicals who had lionized her months earlier. It did not help that she always stressed the damage she believed the war in Vietnam was inflicting on American constitutional processes. (Her essays on lying did not become popular until Watergate.) To the end, Arendt believed that the structures, methods, and ideas of the American Revolution were gifts to the world that were being contaminated because people cared too little about the high art and practice of politics itself. Her last book, *The Life of the Mind*, describes the functions of the human mind in a kind of allegory based on the idealized interaction between the three branches of government. For this sort of thing she was dismissed as too tepid, too middle-class.

Yet Hannah Arendt always had one thing in common with the student radicals who praised or dismissed her: she, like they, denied being middle-class. This was symptomatic of the times, but it has a special meaning for anyone trying to assess Arendt's work. There is a resonance to the idea of Arendt and the middle class that neither Arendt herself nor her biographer ever discussed.

Here is a philosopher who managed to touch a raw nerve in the world at large with two of her books, one of which described the Nazi regime as the culmination of all the 19th-century bourgeois movements, while the other described a mass murderer as "banal," a typical office manager. Both books described Hitler's Jewish victims as neat, well-educated, and meek—stereotypical bureaucrats being gassed by other stereotypical bureaucrats. In her portrait, Jews fulfilled their historical role as the middlemen, the "in-between people," forerunners of the middle class itself, and the Nazis lived out the house painter's fanatical dream of white men and white collars, second to none. The Master Race tried to wipe out the Chosen People to establish primacy in the modern world of bourgeois values.

Eichmann's father was an accountant for a trolley company; Arendt's father was an office worker for an electrical engineering firm. Because her work drips with symbolism of the middle class, it is almost startling to reflect that she wrote almost nothing in her life about the meaning of the middle class. What little there is contains only passing scorn for "the bourgeoisie," as intellectuals have always labeled that drab species. Her definition of the bourgeoisie is narrow and uncharacteristically banal: its members "conceived of life as a process of perpetually becoming wealthier, and considered money something sacrosanct which under no circumstances should be a mere commodity for consumption." She added, what for Arendt was the worst insult, that bourgeois people "consider political institutions exclusively as an instrument for the protection of

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Arendt had an inchoate awareness that the world was becoming middle class; unlike most modern philosophers, she felt compelled to write about what that meant.

individual property." Naturally she did not want to include herself, Jews, or intellectuals in such a loathsome category. Sometimes she called the intellectuals a class by themselves. Sometimes she divided Jews into the bad "parvenus" who tried to gain acceptance into the aristocracy or the "pariahs" like herself, who remained essentially classless. And in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* she wrote that to avoid "ambiguity" a Jew must "belong either to an overprivileged upper class or to an underprivileged mass which, in Western and Central Europe, one could belong to only through an intellectual and somewhat artificial solidarity." Here she denied the middle-class alternative completely, which seems to represent her inner wish.

This is one of the few regions in which Arendt's thoughts and experiences are dismayingly typical of modern intellectuals. Most people who embraced the cult of the intellectual in the fifties will now admit being middle-class only if someone accuses them of being rich. Intellectuals have always cherished detachment, but they need detachment from the middle class more than from most anything else. Historically, the role of an intellectual in politics has been to defend either the downtrodden against tyrants or the civilized against the mob, always coming in from the outside like philanthropists.

My own generation (World War II baby boom) came along with similar attitudes 40 years after Arendt. Generally, we wanted to avoid both the grubby world of the worker and the bloody world of the ruler, so we drifted into occupations that gave a reformist tinge to the managerial function—planner, organizer, lawyer, analyzer. In fact, we helped complete the merger of the intelligentsia and the middle class, to the point that few now dare call themselves intellectuals because the hidden reality is too obvious—they're just other, literate middle-class people.

The Bourgeoisentsia

It is no surprise that the subconscious eye of our culture identifies with the middle class. In recent years, the same American economy that has displaced millions of workers through industrial obsolescence has made room for new strata of middle-class employees from the "two-income family," whose problems have been depicted extensively and individually—meaning sympathetically—in the media, whereas the displaced workers are usually objectified into a worrisome class. When the price of oil doubled nine years ago, it was taken for granted that the middle-class sectors of the economy would "adjust" upward through devices like the cost-of-living index rather than submit to the lower standard of living that logic seemed to require. A rumor of disaster in a single computer company sent Wall Street reeling last year, an indicator of how completely our hopes have come to center on an industry that is new and wonderful but also essentially administrative and derivative, middle-class to the core. And of course there are crasser signs that some areas have become bourgeois in the worst sense. Issues of war and peace are debated on the merits of marginal dollars in the military budget to the exclusion of nearly all other factors, such as those that produced victory for the North Vietnamese or for the United States in all wars for which it was "unprepared."

Arendt and her readers must have had an inchoate awareness that the world was becoming middle-class; the fierce popular resistance to the Eichmann she portrayed makes sense not only to survivors of the Holocaust but also to anyone who projects a globe full of civilian Eichmanns. What does not make sense, however, is that most of Arendt's readers and heirs still speak of politics as Karl Marx's contest in spite of the fact that the most challenging issue in contemporary America

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is the issue of the middle class. To meet this challenge, modern political philosophers would have to understand and redefine the middle class, including themselves, in politics, and this is a task that has always been repugnant to the best of them, such as Arendt. Intellectuals of the left and right have preferred to remain "princes of the mind," leaving the middle-class field to the dubious inspiration of the politicians. President Reagan was elected on the appeal of the absurd proposition that our government's generosity to the poor has fatally contaminated the entire economy. (No society has ever done itself in with generosity.) The Democrats answer lamely; their leaders know that few people will believe the corresponding absurdity of blaming all problems on the millionaires, but they can think of little else to say. Both parties steadfastly ignore the elementary fact that nearly all the government's largess goes to the people who control it—the middle class. This is why politicians of every persuasion are so helpless in the face of the Social Security deficit, and so mute about similar disasters ahead in military and civilian retirement. What is at stake here is more than the national debt or the health of the economy, for to the extent that the middle class supersedes the ancient polar structure of society as rich and poor, rulers and ruled, something essential to both the discipline of society and the rules of politics is threatened. A balance is lost, whether called dialectical tension or checks and balances. No one wants to acknowledge such a development, which in turn threatens the very meaning of politics. The middle-class referee, who blindly but stubbornly insists on supervising the ancient fight between rich and poor, has grown so fat that he threatens to cave in the arena.

Arendt, writing far ahead of the times, only glimpsed these problems in their moral aspects, and she denied the middle-class elements of herself and people like her just as she had once minimized being Jewish. Nevertheless, she felt compelled to keep going back to the Jews and the Nazis, to something she found both fascinating and essentially tasteless—a kind of people emerging in the world whose habits and manner seemed more important than traditional differences, whose similarities stood out even in the most unspeakable atrocity, whose calm, professional self-discipline somehow produced undisciplined mass movements that never knew when to stop. Arendt was brave enough to try to understand Eichmann not just as an enemy but as an inevitable by-product of the modern world. Her would-be successors are far less brave—it is even more important for them to avoid the middle-class issue entirely because it is closer to home, and, paradoxically, because it's easier for the contemporary intelligentsia to hide in the middle class.

Human appetites and progress have created an all-encompassing middle class that includes the thin, broad phalanx once called the intelligentsia. It is no longer enough for such people to avoid their middle-class status by claiming to hate television and fast-food restaurants. In present times, simple-minded scorn for "the bourgeoisie" amounts to self-denial and is dangerous to the republic. Members of the modern middle class have exchanged the virtues of the old intellectuals for the vices of the stereotypical bourgeoisie, and vice versa. Like the old trade guilds, modern intellectuals have specialized assiduously, building protective walls of "expertise." Like classic intellectuals, they also pretend they have no distinct "interests"—as professionals, managers, and doctors to society. We assume that politicians, capitalists, and labor unions look after themselves, but we seldom think the same of economists or philosophers. It is in the interest of the huge new middle class to maintain that it represents others and to restrict attention to the various safe specialties of thought and trade. Lost in the process is the most vital quality of the classical intellectual—the eagerness to venture across the boundaries of the recognized disciplines, always trying to turn expertise into wisdom. Also lost is the old burgher's acknowledgement of his self-interest. The first quality makes for fine minds and active citizens; the second makes for honest ones.

Nearly ten years ago, I.F. Stone retired from journalism to devote his remaining life to the study of a single question: Can socialism be compatible with freedom? His quest led him to the writings of the Greek philosophers and to the mastery of their language. Stone soon admitted that the entry into the world of Greek ideas and politics made him drunk with pleasure. As yet, he has announced no results on the key question, but his project would have won Hannah Arendt's warm approval. I would suggest related quests on the compatibility of freedom with bureaucracy and the middle class. In the meantime, we should act in the world as though they are compatible, as Arendt would have done. Few of us can absorb all her ideas, but the world desperately needs some of her spirit. ■

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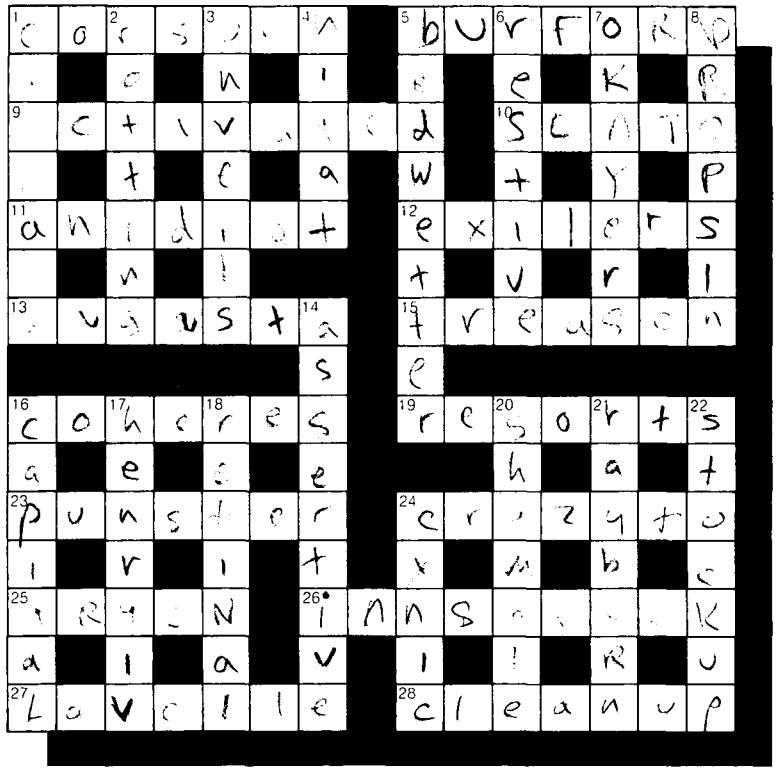
POLITICAL PUZZLE



by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2,3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.

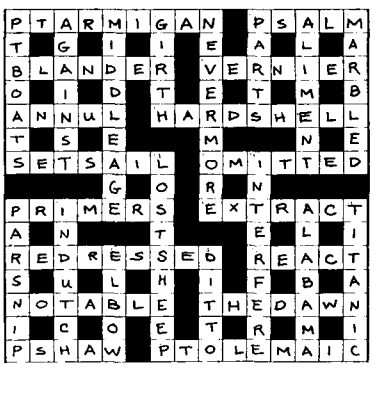
ACROSS

1. Grouch's leader in 28 Across effort. (7)
5. A rose by any other name? (7)
9. Put in motion to evict data. (9)
10. Allies put to sea. Rather the reverse. (5)
11. Relator of life's tale per W.S. (2,5)
12. Napoleon's foes turn up in Reel VI. (7)
13. Capital article after one month. (7)
15. Capital crime for senator. (7)
16. Comes together to meet 100 heroes. (7)
19. Adjusts mail for 13 or 26 Across for example. (7)
23. Droll wordsmith put rents up. (7)
24. Insane desire for action reformed cozy rat. (5,2)
25. Throw weight around little railway to test clothing. (3,2)
26. Hotels back up the curb before 1,000 in Austria. (9)
27. Article against her in France led to her dismissal. (7)
28. Pa and uncle organized what 1 and 27 Across were supposed to do. (5,2)

DOWN

1. Replacing one gram with a hundred would move this into North America. (7)
2. Decomposed grit not decomposing. (7)
3. Announces evil sun dance. (7)
4. Arrangement that I attack. (3,2)
5. Problem child shook up first of two, beet-red. (3-6)
6. Form of verse it is hard to control. (7)
7. Yes, okra cooked up for yes-men (7)
8. Become pure by visits? (5,2)
14. Site-saver turns bold. (9)
16. Both gain and punishment for Washington. (7)
17. Cast Hydrogen in very important Shakespeare part. (5,2)
18. Cast raline as type of body part. (7)
20. Lamb she trained for awkward gait. (7)
21. Heavy sun tan for House leader? (7)
22. Gather pucks to fill shelves. (5,2)
24. He doesn't believe in Nancy Nicholson. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

Acid Rain. Robert H. Boyle. *Schocken, $14.95/$8.95.* The authors have combined frightening statistics (fish will die in 50,000 lakes over the next 20 years if nothing is done) with accessible prose to produce a book for the non-scientist on the causes and effects of acid rain. More chilling than their statistics is the description of the Reagan administration's cynical use of the issue's scientific complexity to forestall any effective legislation.

—James Gibney

Consequences of Party Reform. Nelson W. Polsby. *Oxford University, $8.95.*

Contract on America: The Mafia Murders of John and Robert Kennedy. David E. Scheim. *Argyle Press.* Especially recommended for long-time skeptics—of which I'm one—of JFK assassination-conspiracy theories. Scheim, who spent ten years investigating the subject on his own, offers a meticulously documented hypothesis that President Kennedy was murdered at the behest of the Mafia. Of particular interest is his account of how the Warren Commission ignored and then covered up Jack Ruby's extensive Mob ties, and a convincing explanation that Jim Garrison's well-publicized allegations of a conspiracy in the mid-sixties were actually designed to divert attention from the role of New Orleans criminal bosses. One remains a skeptic—particularly after reading the appendix, where Robert's assassination is also linked to the underworld—but on the whole it's a worthwhile book.

—Phil Keisling

Disorganized Crime: The Economics of the Visible Hand. Peter Reuter. *MIT Press, $17.50.*

An Economic History of Women in America. Julie A. Matthaei. *Schocken, $29.50/$11.95.*

How We Live: An Economic Perspective on Americans from Birth to Death. Victor R. Fuchs. *Harvard University, $17.50.*

Industrial Renaissance. William J. Abernathy, Kim B. Clark, Alan M. Kantrow. *Basic, $19.* This excellent and provocative book focuses on the Japanese and American automobile industries in an effort to explain the larger failure of American manufacturers to remain competitive in international markets. The authors, who teach at Harvard Business School, combine management analysis with on-site interviews to demonstrate that most of the conventional explanations for Detroit's failings—comparatively higher wage rates, failure to invest in new equipment, a "too-strong" dollar that makes imports cheap—hide a more disturbing truth: most of the $1,500 difference between comparable American and Japanese cars is attributable to Japan's superior productivity. For example, while it takes Ford 84 man-hours to build a small car, it takes Nissan only 51. "After owning their new cars for one month," the authors add, "U.S. consumers reported three to five times more defects in American cars."

To help explain the greater Japanese productivity, the authors offer two organizational models. America's system is called "just in case"; it relies heavily on large inventories that are used as a hedge against the interruption of long production runs. Delays are planned for in this system; partly as a result they also occur often. The Japanese system is labeled "Just in time"; its goal is to minimize inventory by having all components of the operation constantly working at peak efficiency. This puts more pressure and responsibility on managers and workers alike to use energy and initiative to solve problems. It's also a system that seems to work.

Still, the book is refreshingly more optimistic than those who seem resigned to the inevitable capitulation of our manufacturers to foreign competitors. There is a great deal of improvement possible in the auto industry, and it would cost virtually nothing to achieve. Nor does greater productivity require adoption of the disturbingly regimented techniques so often associated with Japanese management. One of the book's most interesting passages describes the origins of the Japanese "just-in-time" model: Henry Ford's Model T factories of more than half a century ago.

—P.K.

The Insanity Plea. Judy Rose, William Winslade. *Scribners, $14.95.*

Marie. Peter Maas. *Random House, $16.95.* A fascinating account of one woman's stand against a corrupt state administration. She was a parole official and the governor (Ray Blanton of Tennessee) and his cronies were selling pardons. She refused to go along and eventually helped bring him down. The good guys and bad guys do not divide along the usual liberal lines. Among the former are the FBI and the woman's attorney, Fred Thompson, who sometimes seemed to be Nixon's errand boy during Watergate. Among the bad guys are the highly respected *Nashville Tennessean*, which tilted its coverage in favor of Blanton; the Tennessee legislature's Black Caucus, which forced the retention in office of a black who had most definitely gone along repeatedly; and the Carter-Civiletti Justice Department, which delayed the indictment of the Democratic governor until after the 1980 general election.

—Charles Peters

Justice Without Law. Jerold S. Auerbach. *Oxford University, $16.95.*

Lobbying for Freedom in the 1980s: A Grass Roots Guide. Kenneth P. Norwick, ed. *Putnam, $14.95/$6.95.*

The Reagans: A Political Portrait. Peter Hannaford. *Putnam, $19.95.*

Renewing American Industry. Paul R. Lawrence, Davis Dyer. *Macmillan, $19.95.*

Risk by Choice: Regulating Health and Safety in the Workplace. W. Kip Viscusi. *Harvard University, $18.50.*

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The Strategic Metals War: The Current Crisis and Your Investment Opportunities. James E. Sinclair, Robert Parker. *Crown, $17.50.* Yet another book that offers dire warnings of an impending resource shortage—and then gleefully tells you how to make a bundle off it. This time the subject is strategic metals such as manganese, vanadium, and chrome. Since only a few countries have such minerals, notably the Soviet Union and South Africa, the United States is highly vulnerable to any sudden reduction of supply.

So on one hand the authors endorse various means to head off this crisis: building up our strategic stockpiles, relaxing mining restrictions in the United States, smoothing relations with South Africa, unilaterally declaring that American firms have a right to mine the seabeds. But what happens if these suggestions are followed, and the much-vaunted crisis is thwarted? Those much-vaunted investment opportunities vanish. This explains why the part of the book written with the deepest feeling is the one that offers the most lucrative possibilities for would-be investors: increased aggressiveness by the Soviet Union, continued escalation in U.S. defense spending, and political instability in South Africa.

—Thomas Freedman

"A potent antidote to the supply-side nonsense on which the calamities of Reaganomics are shakily founded. Anyone to the left of Milton Friedman will be impressed."—**Robert Lekachman**
"An uncommonly incisive analysis. . . . This is an important book, one that might well set the agenda for the future of social policy."
—**Herbert Gintis**

WHO GETS WHAT FROM GOVERNMENT by Benjamin I. Page

$15.95
At bookstores

University of California Press
Berkeley 94720

Thinking about National Security: Defense and Foreign Policy in a Dangerous World. Harold Brown. *Westview/Hearst, $17.95.* Jimmy Carter's former defense secretary has produced a reasonable, intelligent, and passionless tour of foreign policy, military, and arms control issues. He sketches out once again the major differences between the Carter and Reagan defense policies, and while he certainly knows his subject far more intimately than Weinberger or Reagan, he often ends up with similar conclusions. The book is a constant reminder of the narrow consensus that prevails on national security policies.

Brown does offer a few good suggestions—for example, the replacement of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with a unified general staff that would be less prone to interservice rivalries. But those looking for a memoir will be disappointed; the names Carter and Reagan appear rarely; Brzezinski, Vance, Weinberger, and Haig not at all. This is unfortunate, for it often makes Brown's book read like a *Foreign Affairs* article written by a twice-a-year visitor to Washington rather than a veteran of two decades of bureaucratic wars at the highest levels of government.

—Ronald Brownstein

The Way the World Works: How Economies Fail and Succeed. Jude Wanniski. *Simon & Schuster, $34.50/$5.95.*

U.S.S.R. in Crisis. Marshall I. Goldman. *Norton, $15.* In spite of rhetoric that alternates between leaving the the Russians "on the ash heap of history" and expressions of hope about Yuri Andropov because of his musical and literary tastes, Goldman's book on the problems of the Soviet economy is refreshing. The organized planning model made dogma by Stalin has proved a straightjacket, Goldman observes, and not only is Soviet industry capt ve to "gigantomania"—stressing quantity of goods rather than needs and quality—but the communists have been in power for so long that the Soviet people are utterly disoriented when they are forced to make their own economic decisions. Bureaucratic turf protection and the Kremlin's fear of a Soviet version of Solidarity make fundamental changes unlikely—which should work to our benefit, assuming we learn how to reform our own obsolete and poorly run industries.

—Charlie Euchner

What about the Russians and Nuclear War? Ground Zero Project. *Pocket Books, $47.40.*

Working Together. John Simmons, William Mares. *Knopf, $15.95.* At a time when factories are closing and corporate profits are dropping, Simmons and Mares present a convincing, if somewhat optimistic, case that workplace democracy can boost American productivity. They tell American management what Japanese management has long known: soliciting worker input can be profitable. ("American managers tend to be too authoritarian," as one astute Japanese businessman observed.) They also remind skeptical union leaders that employee ownership and/or participation can stave off plant closings.

Drawing on interviews with both labor and management, the authors describe the troubles and successes of dozens of worker participation plans, from GM's Chevrolet Gear and Axle Plant in Detroit to the small Donnelly Mirrors in Holland, Michigan. Despite the authors' jubilation over these programs, it should be kept in mind that current forms of worker participation are hardly radical—they give workers input over daily production problems and personnel decisions but generally not whether management should use the company's tax savings to buy up department stores or to upgrade their plants. Still, if the trends the authors cite persist, "Quality of work-life" programs that increase worker participation may become one of the private sector's mantras in the eighties.

—Nina Easton

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Newsmakers!

A POLE APART
The Emerging Issue of Antarctica

By Philip W. Quigg

"A prime addition to any Antarctica collection...combines essential information with a host of unsuspected implications.... Under the 1961 Antarctic Treaty, military activity has been banned and territorial claims postponed while scientific research has proceeded without impediment: a rare instance of cooperation among the U.S., USSR, and other antagonistic nations. But the prospect of resources-exploitation now poses new questions—environmental, economic, and political." —*Kirkus Reviews*

"Readable, well documented, and timely. Recommended." —*Library Journal*

A Twentieth Century Fund Report / $19.95

DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT AID
Growth, Poverty and Government

By Melvyn B. Krauss

Is well-intentioned U.S. aid actually *hindering* the development of Third World nations? Yes, says a leading economist, who "cites Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea as examples of how...major growth occurred only *after* aid was substantially reduced." —*Policy Digest*

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DIPLOMACY

By Adam Watson

"A major study of communications among the states and diplomacy's vital role in obtaining world goals.... Students of politics and world history and diplomats themselves will find it an invaluable tool." —*United Press International*

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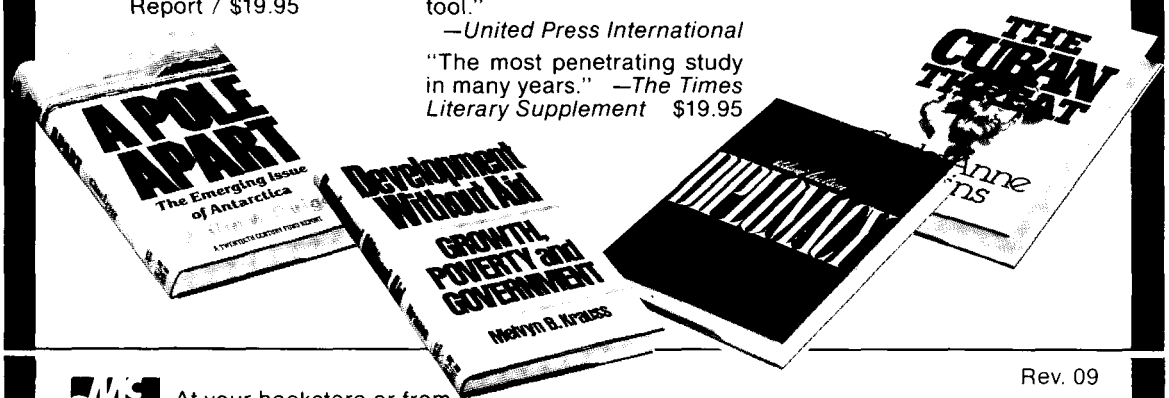
By Carla Anne Robbins

How dangerous *is* Cuba to us? This timely book separates the reality from the myth behind a major concern of U.S. policy makers and Presidents over the past two decades.

The Reagan administration has charged Havana with providing arms and training for revolutionaries in Nicaragua and El Salvador. A recent State Department report accuses the Cubans of establishing a drug smuggling ring to finance guerrilla activities throughout the hemisphere. How accurate are these allegations? What impact should they have on our future policy decisions? This important new book offers some illuminating answers. $17.95



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of American o
left behind in oil fields that were tapped thirty or forty years ago," says Gulf Area Engineer John Shamburger. "In those days, crude was only two or three dollars a barrel, so we would operate an oil well only as long as the oil could be pumped up easily and inexpensively. It made more sense to drill new wells than to squeeze every drop out of old ones."

o low that the oil won't come up without some extra help. The extra help is called tertiary recovery, and it's a whole technology in itself. Here at Heidelberg, Mississippi, we started experimenting with it in 1971.

"One way to build up underground pressure is to set fire to some of the oil deep in the earth. That's called fireflooding. It drives the rest of the oil toward the well, where it can be pumped to the surface. The improvement can be pretty dramatic; in one case, production increased from one hundred to 2300 barrels per day.

"In other parts of the coun-

chemicals to get the oil flo
ing."

All over America, Gulf is
using one or an
technologies to
out of old wells
and it isn't easy
certain source
America energy

Gulf

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"Gulf's underground heat treatment gets more oil from old oil wel

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